

# Increasing the Number of Male Customers

Case Company: Népra

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Faculty of Business Studies  
Degree Programme in International  
Business  
Bachelor's Thesis  
Spring 2017  
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RAJALA, MARI:

Increasing the Number of Male  
Customers  
Case Company: Népra

Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 60 pages, 6 pages of  
appendices

Spring 2017

ABSTRACT

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Marketing is a vital key for companies when trying to attract new customers. Marketing has changed drastically in the past few years with digital media bringing new opportunities for companies – especially for new businesses where there are limited resources available when it comes to marketing. Before stepping into a new market, it is necessary to do a consumer research to get to know target market's purchasing behaviours in detail. Consumer behaviour research will help marketers do an action plan for their company and will show how to attract the customers in the best way possible. This thesis aims to find out the best ways to attract more male customers to the case company. The information from this research is important as the numbers of the sales in the males' department is not as high as the company would hope them to be.

This thesis uses qualitative research methods and an abductive approach. Both primary and secondary data are used to get make the result of the thesis as reliable as possible. The theoretical framework uses reliable online sources as well as literature. The framework will give a comprehensive understanding on why consumer behaviour research is important for companies.

The empirical part of the thesis includes the introduction of the case company Népra as well as the research methods and analysis of the results. The chosen research method for collecting primary data was conducting two online surveys: one for the existing customers of Népra and another one for men aged 25 or over.

The findings of this research indicate that male customers prefer to do their shopping face-to-face with the sellers. However, the results show that they can be approached with a male-oriented marketing through social media.

Keywords: activewear, consumer behaviour, marketing, purchasing decisions, sustainability

Lahden ammattikorkeakoulu

Degree Programme in International Business

RAJALA, MARI:

Miesasiakkaiden Määrän Lisääminen  
Case: Népra

Bachelor's Thesis in International Business, 60 sivua, 6 liitesivua

Kevät 2017

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Markkinointi on tärkeä osa yrityksille kun koitetaan houkutella uusia asiakkaita. Markkinointi on muuttunut voimakkaasti viime vuosina digitaalisen median avulla, ja tämä tuo uusia mahdollisuuksia yrityksille – etenkin uusille yrityksille, joilla on pienemmät resurssit. Ennen uusiin markkinoihin siirtymistä, on tärkeää tehdä kuluttajatutkimus, jolla voi tutustua kohdemarkkinoiden ostotapoihin yksityiskohtaisesti. Kuluttajien käyttäytymistutkimus auttaa markkinoijia tekemään sopivan suunnitelman yritykselleen. Sillä myös saa selville parhaat tavat, kuinka houkutella kohderyhmän asiakkaita. Tämä opinnäytetyö on tehty yhteistyössä Népran kanssa, ja tällä pyritään löytämään parhaat mahdolliset tavat houkutella lisää miesasiakkaita ostamaan yrityksen tuotteita. Tutkimuksesta saadut tiedot ovat tärkeitä, sillä miesten osaston myynnin määrä ei ole yhtä korkea kuin yritys toivoisi.

Tämä opinnäytetyö käyttää kvalitatiivisia tutkimusmenetelmiä ja abduktiivista lähestymistapaa. Lähteitä on kerätty niin primääreistä kuin sekundääreistä lähteistä. Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuuteen käytetään niin luotettavia sähköisiä lähteitä kuin myös kirjallisuutta. Nämä antavat perustavan käsityksen lukijalle siitä, miksi kuluttajakäyttäytymistä tulee tutkia ja miten se hyödyttää yrityksiä.

Opinnäytetyön empiirinen osio sisältää Népran yritysesittely sekä heidän tämänhetkiset markkinointitavat. Myös tutkimusmenetelmät ja tulosten analysointi kuuluu empiiriseen osioon. Data kerättiin kahdella sähköisellä kyselytutkimuksella: toinen oli suunnattu nykyisille Népran asiakkaille ja toinen oli yleinen kysely päälle 25-vuotiaille miehille.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että miehet haluavat tehdä ostoksia kasvokkain myyjien kanssa. Tulokset osoittavat kuitenkin, että heitä voidaan lähestyä miespuolisella markkinoinnilla sosiaalisen median kautta. Lisätutkimusta muiden yritysten markkinointitavoista suositellaan.

Avainsanat: kestävyys, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, liikuntavaatetus, markkinointi, ostopäätökset

## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Thesis Background	1
1.2	Thesis Objectives, Research Question & Limitations	1
1.3	Theoretical Framework	2
1.4	Thesis Methodology and Data Collection	3
1.5	Thesis Structure	4
2	MARKETING	6
2.1	Marketing as a Concept	6
2.2	New Era of Marketing	6
2.3	Marketing as a Start-Up Company	8
3	CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR	12
3.1	Definition of Consumer Behaviour	12
3.2	Factors Affecting Consumerism	13
3.2.1	External Factors	13
3.2.2	Internal Factors	15
3.3	Purchase Decision Making	17
4	CASE COMPANY	20
4.1	Company Background	20
4.2	Current Marketing	21
4.3	The Problems of Activewear Industry	22
5	RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS	24
5.1	Research Methods and Data Collection	24
5.2	Design of the Survey	25
5.3	Data Analysis	26
5.4	Comparison of the Respondent Groups	49
5.5	Suggestions for the Case Company	51
6	CONCLUSIONS	53
6.1	Answers to Research Questions	53
6.2	Validity and Reliability	54
6.3	Suggestions for Further Research	55
7	SUMMARY	56

REFERENCES	57
APPENDICES	61

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Thesis Structure

FIGURE 2. Consumer Behaviour Influences

FIGURE 3. A Model of Consumer Buying Process

FIGURE 4. The Supply Chain and its Transparency

FIGURE 5. General Survey's Question 1 Results

FIGURE 6. Customers' Survey's Question 1 Results

FIGURE 7. General Survey's Question 2 Results

FIGURE 8. Customers' Survey's Question 2 Results

FIGURE 9. General Survey's Question 3 Results

FIGURE 10. Customer's Survey's Question 3 Results

FIGURE 11. General Survey's Question 4 Results

FIGURE 12. Customers' Survey's Question 4 Results

FIGURE 13. General Survey's Question 5 Results

FIGURE 14. Customers' Survey's Question 5 Results

FIGURE 15. General Survey's Question 6 Results

FIGURE 16. Customers' Survey's Question 6 Results

FIGURE 17. General Survey's Question 7 Results

FIGURE 18. Customers' Survey's Question 7 Results

FIGURE 19. General Survey's Question 8 Results

FIGURE 20. Customers' Survey's Question 8 Results

FIGURE 21. General Survey's Question 9 Results

FIGURE 22. Customers' Survey's Question 9 Results

FIGURE 23. General Survey's Question 10 Results

FIGURE 24. Customers' Survey's Question 10 Results

FIGURE 25. General Survey's Question 11 Results

FIGURE 26. Customers' Survey's Question 11 Results

FIGURE 27. General Survey's Question 12 Results

FIGURE 28. Customers' Survey's Question 12 Results

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the thesis and explains the methods used to complete the research. The reason and motivation of the research is explained and the research questions are presented.

### 1.1 Thesis Background

The aim of this thesis is to do market research for a case company that wishes to increase the number of the male customers. Before starting a plan on marketing and how to attract customers, it is important to get to know your target audience. The basis of any successful marketing plan is research; what are your customers' consumer behaviours, their needs, demands and wants. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 26.) In today's world, it can be very challenging for companies to reach their target audience because of the increasingly trending online targeted marketing. This type of advertising can be overwhelming to consumers and that is why the companies need to be careful of their methods. It is important to understand the audience and what their behaviours are, in order to make up the best marketing plan. (Court et al. 2009.) Before one can truly understand the meaning of consumer behaviour, they need to get a general understanding of marketing as well. This thesis will provide the needed theoretical framework for the subject as well as an empirical study for the target audience in order to help the case company understand what their consumers would want.

### 1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Question & Limitations

The objective of this thesis is to examine how to attract and market products to over 25-year-old men who are living in Europe. The thesis is made for an ethical activewear company based in Lahti, Finland. They produce clothing for both men and women, however their customer base consists mainly of women. The author is interested in sustainable fashion and has done a marketing internship for a similar start-up company, and



thus has an understanding on how the business could execute their marketing with the limitations of a start-up company.

The purpose of this thesis is to help the case company attract more male customers and get them buying their products. Through their experience, the company has made an assumption that male customers might use less social media or different platforms than women, which could explain the lack of male customers. Thus, this thesis will also have a look at the social media usage of men over 25 years of age.

The main research question is:

- How should the case company market their products in order to increase their sales in the males' department?

To achieve the result for the main question, the following sub-questions will be used:

- What attributes in activewear are the most important for men?
- How much does a sustainable background mean to male consumers?
- Do men use social media for purchasing purposes?
- How often do men buy new activewear?

The research for the study focuses on the situation of the company.

Though the surveys were done for both existing customers as well as to other men, the result of the thesis is mostly applicable for the case company. Thus, the thesis might not be useful in other situations and the result cannot be generalized for other companies. This research will not include men under 25 years, as the case company's target audience is employed men who are over or exactly 25 years of age.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical part of this thesis will revolve around consumer behaviour, its research and importance for company's marketing plans. The most

important aspect for this research is to know how to get to know your target audience, and how to market the products to them as a start-up company in the most successful way possible. The primary literature source was the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of A Framework for Marketing Management by Kotler & Keller, however other reliable sources are used in all of the parts of the thesis.

This thesis aims to make the reader familiar with the concepts and theories based around marketing, and more specifically consumer behaviour. It will also introduce the best and cost-efficient ways to market as a start-up. The theoretical framework will be based on secondary information gathered from different reliable written and electronic sources.

#### 1.4 Thesis Methodology and Data Collection

The two most common ways of approach research are deductive or inductive. Deductive research has a clear theoretical position before to the collection of data – in other words it tests an already existing theory.

Inductive research means the study is based on developing a theory after the data collecting. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 124-127.)

However, this thesis is more specifically a mixture of the two, which is called abductive reasoning. Abductive research is provoked by a puzzling situation, in this case the case company's eagerness to get more male customers. The author has been given a hypothesis of the situation – do men use less social media, what attracts them – and existing theory will be used in order to get an in-depth understanding of the theme. After it, a research will be performed to create a new theory and to answer the problem. Abductive reasoning therefore could be summarized into thinking from evidence to an explanation. (Aliseda 2006, 28.)

This thesis is a qualitative research. Qualitative research is used to gather data in a non-numerical form, for example by questionnaires and unstructured observations. (McLeod 2008.) Qualitative research often builds theory, but most of the time it will not test the theory found. It can be labelled as an interpretive research, as it tries to find an understanding

through detailed description. (Cooper & Schindler 2014, 144.) The most common questions for a qualitative research are how and what. (Creswell 2014, 185.)

The primary data collection method in the empirical part is the two online surveys which were made for both existing customers of the case company and other consumers who applied to the target audience of the research. The surveys were distributed in two different ways: the survey for existing customers was spread through email to them and the other was distributed through social media in Facebook. The aim of the surveys is to give an idea for the case company on what male consumers look for when they are searching for new products, and how to attract them in the future.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

The first part of the thesis, both Chapter two and Chapter three, are the theoretical framework that are needed in order to set a base to the research in question. In Chapter two the concept of marketing will be introduced with information on the new era of marketing. The best ways to market a start-up company are also discussed to make the reader aware of the different aspects that a start-up company might encounter when marketing their products. The third main chapter will take a closer step to the research question and will focus on consumer behaviour research. The main data collection method in this thesis is consumer research, which is why it is necessary for the reader to understand the theory behind the action. The general definition of consumer behaviour will be explained, as well as the factors influencing it. Lastly in Chapter three the steps of consumer buying process are presented in detail.

After the theoretical framework, the empirical part of the thesis will come. Chapter four will introduce the reader to the case company and their background and current marketing ways. This chapter will give the reader a better idea of the products and the ethics behind the case company, which will later help the reader understand to understand the suggestions

the author made for the future for the company. In the fourth chapter, the general industry the case company is doing business is also explained.

After the introduction of the case company, the research methods and data collection methods are explained. This chapter also shows the reader the formation of the online surveys and the results of the surveys are explained in detail and with graphical formats. After this, the collected data is carefully analysed.

Following the data analysis, a conclusion is given. In this part the text revisits the research questions and will answer to them based on the information that has been gained throughout the work. The validity and reliability are also evaluated, and suggestions for further research are made. Lastly, a summary of the whole thesis process will follow.

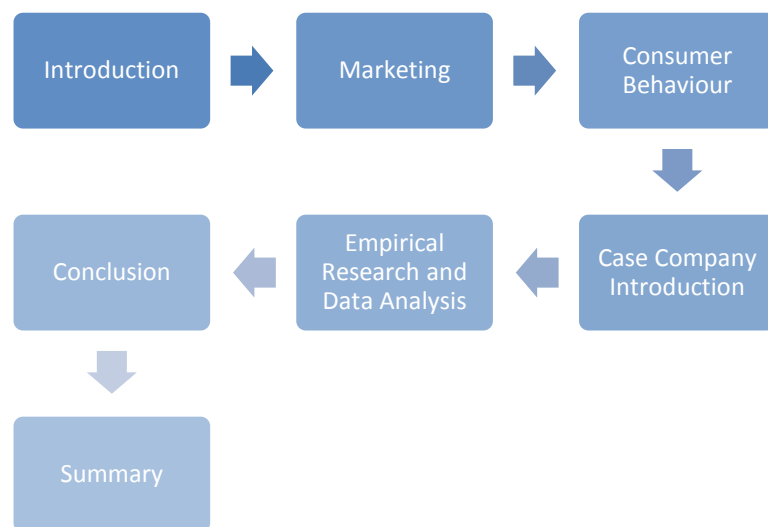


FIGURE 1. Thesis Structure

Figure 1 shows the discussed structure of the thesis. The next chapter is the first part of the theoretical framework, introducing marketing and the concepts of it that are the most important for this study.

## 2 MARKETING

This chapter will introduce the basics of marketing before going into consumer behaviour research. Firstly, the basics of marketing will be introduced. Then, the new era of marketing, in other words digital media marketing will be explained and lastly, the best ways of marketing for a start-up company will be defined.

### 2.1 Marketing as a Concept

In short, marketing can be defined as the action of selling and promoting services and products. Marketing includes both market research, including consumer behaviour which the thesis will cover in Chapter 3, and advertising. (Oxford Dictionaries 2016.) Accounting, operations and other business functions would not matter without a proper demand for the services or products. Profit and financial success quite often depend on the company's marketing ability. A successful marketing plan builds demand on the products and commodities, thus making the company gain profit. One could say marketing creates jobs for the company: without profit a company cannot grow further, and profit can only be gained from customers. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 26.)

In marketing, it is important to identify and meet both social and human needs. In the business world, one could say marketing is about meeting consumers' needs in a profitable way. The most important thing, however, is not to sell the product – it is more about knowing your customer so well that the service or products fit them in a way that it sells itself. This would ideally lead to a customer who is ready to buy the marketed item. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 26-27.)

### 2.2 New Era of Marketing

As we are living in an Internet-fueled environment where the competition, consumers, economic forces and technology change fast, marketers need to react quickly and choose how much to spend on advertising in general.

The marketplace is dramatically different from what it was even only a decade ago, with new opportunities and challenges. The biggest changes can be summarized into three things: globalization, social responsibility, and technology. All of these three things tie up together into the world's digitalization and the ability to get information only with a click of a finger. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 26-31.)

These days the world has become a smaller place thanks to the Internet and new technology. New means of transportation, shipping and communication technologies have made it easy for everyone to know the rest of the world: to travel, to buy and to sell anything anywhere. This has also increased the amount of competition in industries, and it is getting harder and harder to make a brand known and getting the customer interested. Globalization has made countries more multicultural than they have ever been before, and the buying power grows fast. (Kotler & Keller 32.) This has given companies even more reason to get to know their consumer base, and to know what their needs and wants are. When deciding on a target market, not only is it necessary to decide the gender and age of the target audience: the company also needs to do a geographic target area and research it. It is crucial to see the trends and requirements people might have in the selected areas in order to get publicity and profit from them. (Herrmann 2015.)

Globalization has also brought up current issues, one of which is social responsibility. With the new technology and digitalization, people are more and more aware of the issues surrounding the environment and social issues. People also expect companies to tackle these issues and hold them to a high standard. (Post 2017.) According to a study made by Cone Communications (2015), nine in ten consumers expect companies to perform responsibly in order to address both environmental and social issues (Cone Communications 2015). People are increasingly interested in the companies' carbon footprints and what kind of effects they have on the environment. Consumers want to hear that companies are building something more than just their own revenue. (Post 2017.) Because the effect of marketing extends to the society as a whole, marketers need to

consider the environmental, ethical, legal and the social context of their decisions and actions (Kotler & Keller 2016, 32).

Lastly, the thing that ties both globalization and social responsibility together, is technology. The traditional ways of marketing are vastly affected by technology. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 31.) People are spending more and more time looking at screens on their phones and laptops. Communicating with one another is in a whole different level than what it used to be, and this also applies to the business world. (Benady 2014.) The communication and information flow goes both ways: due to technology, the customers get more information on companies and their actions. This can also lead to getting too much information and too many companies trying to get people's attention at the same time. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 31-32.) The challenge for companies is to connect with the consumers through screens in real time and to create successful digital media campaigns. (Benady 2014.) The next part will explain the best methods for new businesses to gain audience when entering a new market.

### 2.3 Marketing as a Start-Up Company

A successful start-up can be defined by two things: a fantastic product and a well-thought marketing plan to go with it. A good product is something that the founder is passionate about and sees that there is a niche for it. When deciding on the product, it is also necessary to look at it from a consumer's point of view: would you, as a customer, recommend it to your friends? Word-of-mouth has always been important for companies, as people tend to rely on others' words. In today's world, word-of-mouth is continuously more and more important: people can read reviews in real time online and the average rating of the companies matter when deciding on from where they should buy a product or a service. (Venture Harbour 2017.)

Thanks to digitalization, start-ups have more and more possibilities of becoming successful and international even in the early stages of the

company. It also brings up more challenges: because the audience is bigger, the number of competing companies also increases by default. (Benady 2014.) Especially for start-ups, it is important to look at marketing and production in the most economical and at the same time, the most profitable way possible (Toren 2016).

As a start-up, it is necessary to firstly figure out the target market. Who are they, what gender, how old are they, how do you attract them (Strauss 2003, 197). After knowing the basic idea of who the target audience is, the company needs to think what sets them apart from other companies and embrace their unique qualities – does the company support a certain social cause with every sale, did the founder invent the idea during a hard time in their life, etcetera. By stating these types of small facts of the company, it is more probable that the company will stay in the consumer's memory and possibly make them come back to the company when searching for services or products that the company offers. (Toren 2016.)

The first customers are significantly important when starting a business. It is crucial to make them feel welcomed and wanted as customers, for example by engaging with them and starting discussions through social media. People will remember a good customer service experience and thus, the next time they are looking for something within the company's niche, they will return to them. (Toren 2016.) This type of engagement with the consumers is more likely to increase the value of the firm in the consumers' eyes, and can create word-of-mouth (Kotler & Keller 2016, 30). As stated earlier in the chapter, word-of-mouth is one of the key elements to start-ups when trying to increase the customer base (Venture Harbour 2017). Word-of-mouth does not only apply to consumers, though; going out and about to different events and networking is also a vital part of being an entrepreneur. Since the beginning, the business world has worked with connections and networking, and digitalization does not change this fact. By making connections with other business owners, new opportunities might rise: someone might be arranging a proper event where your company would fit just perfectly, or you meet a journalist who could possibly make an article about your company. (Toren 2016.)



Lastly, the most economical and budget-friendly way to market a company is through digital media. As a start-up this is the wisest way to advertise, as it makes connecting people relatively easy and efficient. (Benady 2014.) Company websites are possibly the most common ways of digital marketing. They are designed to provide information about the company and their products, and to collect feedback from the company's customers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 528-529.)

E-mail marketing is a very common practice in today's world of marketing. It builds the relationships between the customers and the companies, which is vital for any company. E-mail marketing is based on sending personalized e-mails to the consumers and to let them know of any campaigns that the company might be doing. However, e-mail marketing can be seen as spam and some people do not appreciate it. This is why companies need to ask for permission to use e-mail marketing: the consumers can let the company know their e-mails with consent. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 529-533.)

Social media is even more popular than e-mail marketing these days. People use their phones and laptops more and more every day and the companies need to take advantage of it by using the same social media platforms as the consumers. Being able to interact with the companies in real time has become a norm in today's world and especially start-ups need to take it into account. Social media is the easiest way to connect with the consumers and build better relationships, as it works in real time and makes connecting easier than it has ever been. (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 2-7.)

One option in digital marketing is also to pay for advertising. When deciding on whether to invest in paid advertising on social media, one needs to consider the return on investment (ROI). By investing money in something that could perhaps drive your target market to your website, it could be a good investment and gain the company more followers and profit. (Venture Harbour 2017.) Paid media channels can be, for example, display ads, paid search results and sponsorships (Kotler & Keller 2016,

30). One of the best-known channel is Google Adwords. With Google Adwords, a company can specify keywords or phrases that are relevant to them. When a person searches the keyword on Google, the company's website would pop up in the list as a result. (Google 2017.) Another option is to pay for targeted advertising on Facebook. The company can choose various different aspects of Facebook users in order to have their advertisement pop up on their page. (Facebook 2017.) A list of these attributes can be found below.

- A geographical area from where they want to get customers from.
- Demographics about the users; their education, age, gender, occupation and relationship status
- The users' interests. These are gained from, for example, the information users share on their Facebook page or the ads that they have clicked on before.
- Advanced targeting with custom audiences (a contact list of people the company wants to reach), lookalike audience (finding people who are similar to the already existing customers) and custom audiences from the company's websites (remarketing to people who already visited the company's website)

(Facebook 2017.)

In the next chapter, marketing will be looked at in a more in-depth manner, and the author will introduce the importance of consumer behaviour research in marketing.

### 3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

This chapter will introduce the concept of market research on consumer behaviour and its different stages.

#### 3.1 Definition of Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour can be described as a study to see how individuals or groups select, buy, use and dispose the goods and commodities bought (Kotler & Keller 2016, 93). The study also researches how these bought services or products affect the consumers' daily lives. The concept of consumer behaviour touches everyone: from brushing one's teeth in the morning until going to sleep and putting on an alarm clock. (Noel 2009, 6-15.) Figure 2 summarizes the key elements of the consumer behaviour process.

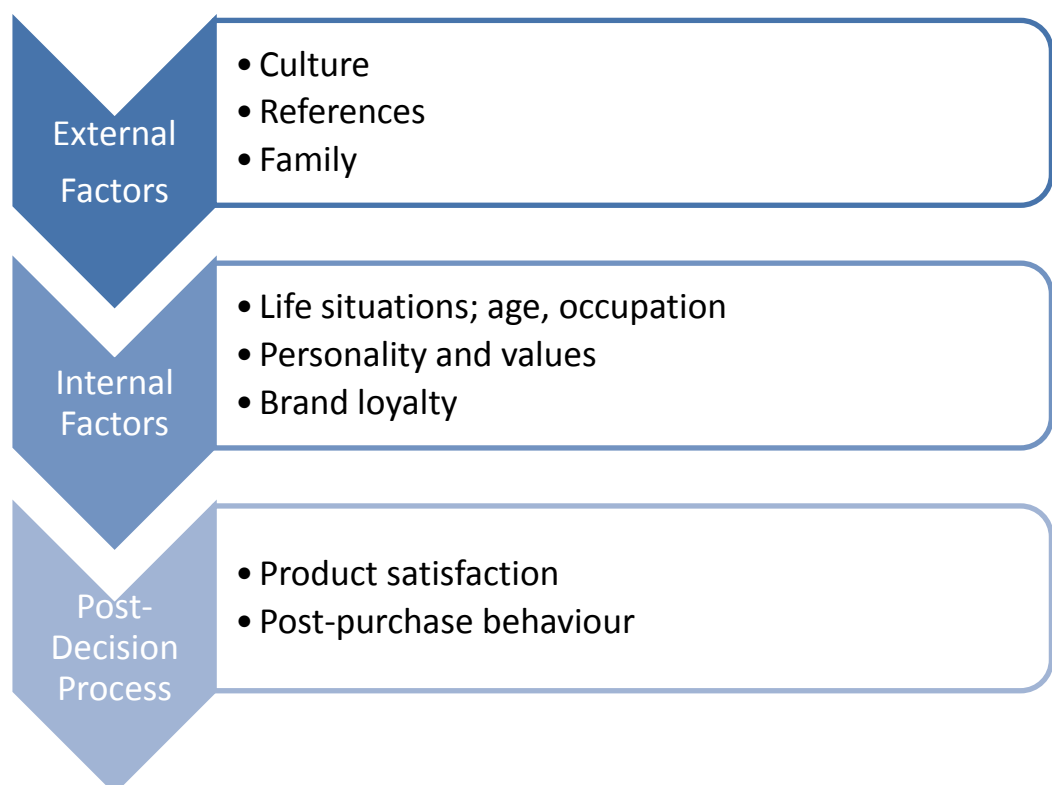


FIGURE 2. Consumer Behaviour Influences (Adapted from Kotler & Keller 2016, 92-103)

Consumer research not only helps companies to identify and define the possible marketing problems, but it also helps to see potential opportunities as well. Additionally, the results of the research will help marketers to develop and evaluate solutions in marketing actions. Understanding the audience's behaviour will allow companies to determine which segments have the needs that the company could satisfy. It also allows companies to see the size and profitability of the target market. (Noel 2009, 30-31.) Especially for new businesses, a market research is crucial: it is important to see that the world is ready for the product or service that the business aims to sell, and that there is a niche for it. Getting feedback of the products is valuable as it will help the company to make the products the best possible. Consumer research will also help a company be up-to-date on the target market's needs and wants, and possible trends regarding the industry the business is in. (Tater 2015.)

The first two factors of consumer behaviour in Figure 2 will be presented and explained in detail in the next part of the chapter.

## 3.2 Factors Affecting Consumerism

As stated, this part of the chapter will introduce the external and internal factors of the consumer behaviour process. The post-purchasing process will also be explained.

### 3.2.1 External Factors

The main external factors on consumer behaviour are: culture, references and family. These external influences are presented and explained below.

#### **Culture**

Culture is a dominant determinant of a person's behaviour and wants: children growing up in different countries have different core values. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 93-94.) Culture can be defined as a shared and learned system of beliefs, values and attitudes that shape an individual's

way of behaviour and perception. In addition, culture might influence how people perceive and process new information. (Noel 2009, 15.) For example, a child growing up in the United States of America is most likely to be exposed to values such as material comfort, success and freedom (Kotler & Keller 2016, 94). Culture also affects decisions on purchasing in many different levels – for example in the taste in clothing, music and entertainment (Noel 2009, 40). Social classes are also part of culture: most of the time the classes are hierarchially ordered by the society. For example, people can be divided into working class, middle class, upper middle class and so on. Studies on different social classes have shown distinct preferences in products and brands. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 93.) For example, some consumers might purchase products that might show off a certain social status (Noel 2009, 17).

## **References**

The references of an individual are all the groups that have a direct or an indirect influence on the person's behaviour and attitudes (Kotler & Keller 2016, 93-94). These groups have a strong impact on an individual's consumption: they convey information and attitudes about which products or commodities one should or should not be buying. This applies especially if a person feels they are similar to their peers and reference groups. (Noel 2009, 17.) People can also be influenced by groups that they do not even belong: aspirational groups are those where an individual hopes to be in, and dissociative groups are the ones whose behaviour and values the individual dismisses. Marketers can try to reach these people by analysing the demographic and psychographic features and applying their marketing ways to them. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 93.)

## **Family**

Family members' attitudes have the biggest influence on an individual's consumer behaviour. People adapt orientations toward things from their families, for example attitudes towards politics, religion and self-worth. Family might also define a person's social class: people in the working

class have different consumption habits than people in the upper middle class. Procreation, for example people's spouses and children, have a big influence on everyday buying behaviour. For example, the majority of people in relationships tend to do joint decisions and payments when buying expensive products and services, such as cars. Children and teens tend to have an influence on a family's purchases as well: they tend to have crucial opinions on, for example, vacation destinations and electronics that the family buys. By the time a child reaches the age of 2, they tend to recognize logos and specific brands. A child might grow up having specific preferences or high dislikes to brands that they saw their parents or guardians use while growing up. (Kotler & Kelles 2016, 94.)

### 3.2.2 Internal Factors

Internal factors are the psychological and personal factors of the individuals. The main internal factors are: the stage in the life cycle (age and occupation), personality and personal values, lifestyle and the attitudes and motivations of an individual. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 94.) These factors are explained in detail below.

#### **The Stage in the Life Cycle**

People's taste in, for example, clothing, food and furniture change as we age. This can also be affected by the age, number and genders of people in the household where an individual is living in. Life events, such as illnesses, childbirth, divorces and career changes might change an individual's consumption habits and raise new needs. Consumption is also affected by the economic situations that an individual might be in, for example whether they are employed or not. Some occupational groups have distinct needs and wants regarding products and services, for example an engineer might need a specific type of software for their equipments. Marketers need to try to identify the occupational groups that have a high interest in the company's products and that they have the correct economic situation for purchasing as well. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 94-95.)

## **Personality and Personal Values**

Personality can be defined as specific psychological traits that have been influenced by the environment an individual grew up in. Companies also have brand personality traits, and consumers are more likely to choose brands that match their own personalities and values. On the other hand, people might choose brands that portray ideals and values that the individual would hope to have, or even buying something that the person thinks others would see them with. Core values are the ones that people mainly grow up with and are hard to change. They are also one of the key influences in consumer decisions. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 95.)

## **Lifestyle**

Lifestyle can differ a lot depending on a person's background; their social class, occupations and culture. A lifestyle is a combination of an individual's way of living through activities, opinions and interests. Marketers need to find out what type of customers they want to attract, and what type of a lifestyle they want to please. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 95.) For example, an activewear company cannot market their clothing by posting pictures of people sleeping, as this is not part of the active lifestyle that the customers prefer.

## **Attitudes and Motivations**

Motivations to buy can be changed in different situations of life. Some of the needs are biogenic, which arise from psychological states such as thirst, hunger or discomfort. Other needs are psychogenic, which arise from psychological states, for example the need for belonging and recognition. These needs turn into motives and motivations to buy certain products or services. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 96.)

Brand associations, or attitudes, are all of the thoughts, feelings and images regarding a specific brand. Customers' loyalty to brands is a big factor on consumer behaviour as well. When deciding on purchasing something, people are more prone to considering brands that they already

know and prefer, rather than looking for new ones. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 98.)

### 3.3 Purchase Decision Making

When a consumer is planning on purchasing something, they normally go through a specific line of phases. Figure 3 shows these stages in detail.



FIGURE 3. A Model of Consumer Buying Process (Kotler & Keller 2016, 100)

The first stage of the whole buying process is recognizing a need for something, whether it is a product or a service. For marketers, the first stage can also be an opportunity; they have the possibility to create a certain need in consumers. This can be done with a thorough content marketing, by sharing facts about the product or service the company might serve. Seeing ads or blog texts about different subjects might create a subconscious need for the specific thing. (Court et al. 2009.) However, most of the times the buying process starts when a person notices they are in need of something. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 100.)



When the first stage happens, the potential buyer's attention heightens and they become more receptive to information about the thing they need. They will also start searching actively for material, asking questions from their friends and going to stores to see options and learn more about the needed product. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 100-101.) In this stage, brand recognition also matters: people start looking at different brands from whom they could buy. Because in today's world it is very easy to get overwhelmed by information and new brands who are trying to market themselves to people, most of the consumers fall back to their usual choices. (Court et al. 2009.) This is why marketing is a big part of how the business will succeed: the company needs to get their brands into the buyer's awareness and consideration (Kotler & Keller 2016, 101).

After the information search, the buyer begins to evaluate and see alternatives to the brands. Questions might arise: "How much money am I ready to spend on this?" and "Do I really need this?" People start to question their needs and evaluate the possible brands. Different people prioritize different things as the most essential, for example by price, quality or appearance. (Professional Academy 2017.) In today's world, it is easy to find reviews online and get recommendations from friends and family, and many of the decisions are made based on them. Traditional ways of marketing, for example advertisements, still matter, however these days companies need to remember to communicate with the customers and learn to influence the customer-driven touch points, such as Internet information websites and word-of-mouth. (Court et al. 2009.)

The fifth phase of the consumer buying process is the purchase decision part. During the evaluation part, the consumers make up preferences among the chosen brands. Generally there are two factors that can affect the purchase intentions and decisions. The first one is the attitude of others; the influence of the attitudes might depend on how positive or negative the opinion is, or how motivated is the buyer to lean on other people's words. The second factor affecting the decisions can be unexpected situations that might occur during the purchase intention. A person might lose their job, or they need to buy something else more

urgently. However, normally at this stage the buyer makes a decision and buys the product or service they needed. As mentioned in the previous part of the chapter, customer loyalty is a big factor of this process as well. Some people are more loyal to brands than others, and might choose the already preferred brand in this process. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 102.)

The final stage is post-purchase behaviour, and this one is the final crucial step for the whole company. In this stage the buyer sees and evaluates on how well the bought item or service actually serve their initial needs and wants. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 102-103.) For example, there has been a study where it was discovered that more than 60 percent of the consumers of facial skin care go back online and do more research on the bought item (Court et al. 2009). A satisfied buyer is more likely to purchase products from the company again and might leave good reviews online, or tell about it to their friends. A dissatisfied customer might abandon the product, and leave bad reviews online. They might also warn their friends not to buy the products. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 103.) Marketers need to be attentive on the reviews they get and answer to both positive and negative feedback they might get. Companies also need to notice the loyal customers, who keep coming back to them, and make them feel welcomed again and again. (Court et al. 2009.)

## 4 CASE COMPANY

The purpose of this chapter is to start the empirical part of the thesis and introduce the case company to the reader as well as familiarize them with the industry in question. The chapter will also tell the company's current ways of marketing to set a base for the research results and analysis.

### 4.1 Company Background

Népra is a company founded in November 2015 with a specific issue in mind. The founders, Anna-Mari Niutanen and Essi Enqvist, were both interested in holistic wellbeing and sustainability. Both of them graduated from Lahti University of Applied Sciences and decided to found a company together based on their mutual interests and needs; a company where everyone in the supply chain would get a fair living wage and where their products would be eco-friendly. The three main points that the company focuses are: building trustworthy relationships with the producers, building a sustainable designing process and sourcing the best materials possible for the products. (Népra 2017c.)

The clothing collections are all designed in the company's headquarters in Lahti, Finland. After the designing, the products are manufactured by their partners in Estonia – with an exception to Népra's socks, which are manufactured in Finland, and to their lazywear t-shirts which are manufactured in partnership with a Finnish company called Pure Waste. These t-shirts are made of 100% recycled material and are responsibly produced in the facilities of Pure Waste in India. Apart from the mentioned t-shirts, the fabrics for Népra's products are sourced from Italy. The key elements for the products are longevity and the feel of the materials. In addition, all of the activewear fabrics have an Oeko-tex 100 Standard Certificate, which means there are no harmful chemicals in the products. In total, 65% of the company's supply chain is transparent and based on real partnerships. (Népra 2017c.) Figure 4 shows the transparent parts of their supply chain.

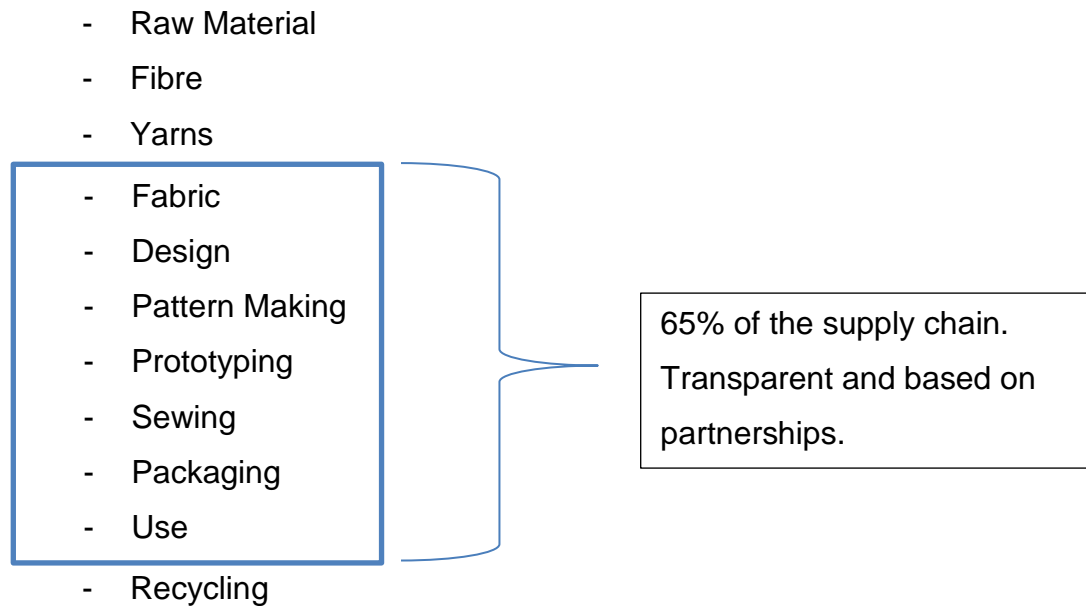


FIGURE 4. The supply chain and its transparency (Népra 2017c)

At the moment Népra has one basic collection called “JANUS” where they wanted to not only make the products the most ethical as possible, but also the most comfortable and durable as possible. They aim to make simple and practical clothing that can be worn at any season and even after multiple washes. (Népra 2017c.)

#### 4.2 Current Marketing

Currently Népra has three different social media platforms where they are active more or less on a daily basis: Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Most of the social media marketing is based on Instagram with hashtags and engaging with the followers by interacting with them and liking their pictures or comments. (Niutanen 2017a.) In Twitter the company posts mainly links to their Instagram updates (Népra 2017c). Facebook is mostly used to tell people about the company’s current events and news about their brand. They also put links to their blogs on Facebook and give a brief explanation of the content. However, Faceebok is updated a little less than for example Instagram. (Niutanen 2017a.)

From these social media platforms it is easy to compare the number of followers the company has on each of them. On Twitter, there are 196

followers (Nepra 2017d) and on Instagram they have 757 followers (Nepra 2017b). On Facebook, however, the numbers are noticeably higher with 937 followers (Nepra 2017a). Currently Népra does not use a lot of paid advertising in social media – according to the co-founder Niutanen, they have used Google Adwords and targeted advertising on Facebook, however only a limited amount. (Niutanen 2017b.) These numbers of followers will be important in the upcoming chapters where the results of the empirical study will be given and analysis and suggestions are done.

Apart from social media, the company also sends newsletter to the people who have signed up for it. They aim to send the letter two to three times per month. In these newsletters they might let the consumers know about their upcoming campaigns and clothing lines. (Niutanen 2017b.)

Népra is also active outside the social media, and the company has a few associate companies with whom they maintain good relationships and might sponsor events with, for example a few crossfit gyms in Finland and Germany. Currently the company is trying out a pop-up store in a crossfit gym located in Helsinki, Finland, to see whether or not these type of pop-ups would bring new clients to them. The company also has a couple of athletes, mainly crossfit athletes, who will be wearing Népra's clothing during their competitions in order to get more publicity from it. (Niutanen 2017b.)

#### 4.3 The Problems of Activewear Industry

Although there are some eco-conscious activewear brands in other parts of the world, in Europe currently there are none that would have based their business on sustainability. Thus, Népra has taken the lead by being the first European company to base their whole business model on it. (Népra 2017c.) This part of the thesis will tell information on the problems of activewear industry in general.

The textile industry is the second most polluting industry in the world, right after the oil industry. It is also one of the most unethical industries: the

fashion industry is unfortunately known for using child labour, unethical wages and sweatshops. (Sweeny 2015.) One example is Nike, one of the most popular activewear brands in the whole world, was once busted for using sweatshops and paying only 14 cents (0,14 US Dollars) per hour to their manufactures back in 1996. There were also allegations of abuse, and this image of the brand lasted for over 7 years. However, slowly but surely the company started to gain the consumers' trust again by publishing all of the names and locations of their manufacturers and showing public reports of the conditions. (Lutz 2015.)

In a study published in January 2016, Greenpeace found that the outdoor clothing gear had toxic chemicals in them – in total they did a research on 40 different outdoor clothing, and all but four ended up having hazardous chemicals. The items for the test were voted by the public and the most popular ones got tested, including brands such as The North Face and Mammut, which are one of the most popular outdoor brands in the world. (Kopp 2016.) The chemicals found on the items were PFCs and PFOAs: these are chemicals that some scientists are not sure whether they actually affect human health. PFC stands for polyfluorinated chemicals, and studies have shown that can affect the developing fetus or child, increase cholesterol and cancer risk, and affect the immune system – however not all of these results are from studies on humans. PFOA on the other hand is a long chain ionic form of PFC, which can increase the risk of cancer, for example. (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry 2016.) The problem is not only the chemicals on clothing – it is inevitable that these chemicals will end up degrading very slowly in the environment and enter the food chain, thus affecting the pollution (Kopp 2016).

## 5 RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will continue the empirical part of the thesis. Firstly, the research methods and data collection methods for primary data are explained. The process and the responses to the data collection are presented and analysed with detail.

### 5.1 Research Methods and Data Collection

The theoretical framework for this thesis related to marketing and consumer behaviour in order to let the reader understand the theory behind the survey. For this thesis to be successful it is important to understand how important knowing the target market is. The theories on this thesis were explained by acclaimed experts in the fields.

To collect primary data the author performed an online survey research. A survey was made for both the existing customers of the case company as well as a general survey for men who are over 25-years-old as per the request of the case company. By doing an online survey, the results will be numerical data which can be then be transformed into useful statistics when analysing. The online survey gives an idea of the attitudes and behaviours of the case company's target audience which will help in the future when a marketing plan is made. (Wyse 2011.) An online survey gives people the option of being anonymous which can motivate people to be more honest with their answers (Kotler & Keller 2016, 65).

Most of the survey questions were closed questions, meaning the questions show the respondents a list of answers to choose from. Closed-ended questions are faster to analyse and put into statistics in these types of surveys (Visser, Krosnick & Lavrakas 2000, 238). However, in order to help to get a more thorough research on the target market, some of the questions had an option to write the respondent's preferred answers. This will give a more in-depth idea of the audience that the case company wishes to pursue.

## 5.2 Design of the Survey

The survey was designed for men aged 25 or over. The aim of the survey was to get a deeper understanding on men and their consumer behaviour as well as social media usage. The goal of the survey was to keep it simple and fast to answer by making most of the questions closed-ended. Some of the questions offered an option for the respondent to write their own, short answer for the question, if necessary. Both the general survey as well as the survey for the customers were formatted on an online survey platform provided by Google. The surveys were written in English to allow people from outside Finland take part in them. The general survey was distributed in social media through Facebook to reach as many people as possible and to minimize the time spent on data collecting. The link for the survey was shared by the author and by a few acquaintances of the author. The survey for the customers was sent via e-mail by the author as well as shared on the case company's social media platforms. The e-mail addresses of the customers were provided to the author from the company. In the e-mail, the author introduced herself and the meaning of the survey for the receivers and linked the survey. Before publishing the surveys, both of them were tested several times to make sure the surveys worked and that they were fast to answer. Both surveys were open for one week: starting from Thursday 4 May 2017 to Friday 12 May 2017.

The first questions, from question one to question four (1 to 4), the background of the respondents is researched. These questions revolve around the age, origin country, employment status and hobbies of the respondents to get a general idea of their situations in life. These questions will also help to categorize the respondents later on when a comparison is made. Question five (5) was whether the respondents knew of Népra before the survey, and if so, where did they hear about them. Questions from six to nine (6-9) were designed to get information on the respondents' buying behaviour and their attitudes on sustainability. Questions 10 and 11 ask about social media and how much the respondents might use them in general. As the case company does a lot of marketing through social media, these questions were made to



understand whether men use social media for the purpose of getting information on new products. Question 12 combines the questions from 6 to 11, asking how often the respondents buy new activewear. Since the case company has fewer male customers when compared to female ones, they have assumed that men might buy activewear more seldom than women. Question 13 is slightly different for the respondent groups: customers were asked for suggestions or ideas that Népra could do differently with their products and marketing. For the other survey, a more generalized question was provided: what would the respondents wish that activewear brands would do regarding marketing, campaigns or products. Lastly, question 14 asks whether the survey takers want campaign information from Népra. This question was to give the respondents the opportunity to get to know Népra more.

The questions are shown in detail in the next part of the chapter, where an analysis is made from the responses.

### 5.3 Data Analysis

In this part, the results of the surveys are presented and analysed in detail. Each question and the responses will be presented graphically in order to provide a clear understanding of the divisions of the answers. Both of the surveys were made similar to each other to make it easier to analyse and compare. The possible differences are mentioned and explained on this chapter, and afterwards a comparison and a deeper analysis of the two respondent groups is made.

In total, there were 83 responses: 48 responses to the general survey and 35 from the customers. For the purpose of this research, the amount of the received responses is limited but enough to draw some conclusions of the target audience and make possible suggestions for the case company. The difference between the two respondent groups is 13 people, which in a smaller group is a rather large amount but does not affect the analysis.

All of the responses are shown in the same way: the answers for the general survey are presented and analysed first, and afterwards the answers from the customers are shown and analysed. Most the responses are shown in a graphical way in order to make it as easy as possible for the reader to understand the results. Figures 5 and 6 show the results for the first question.

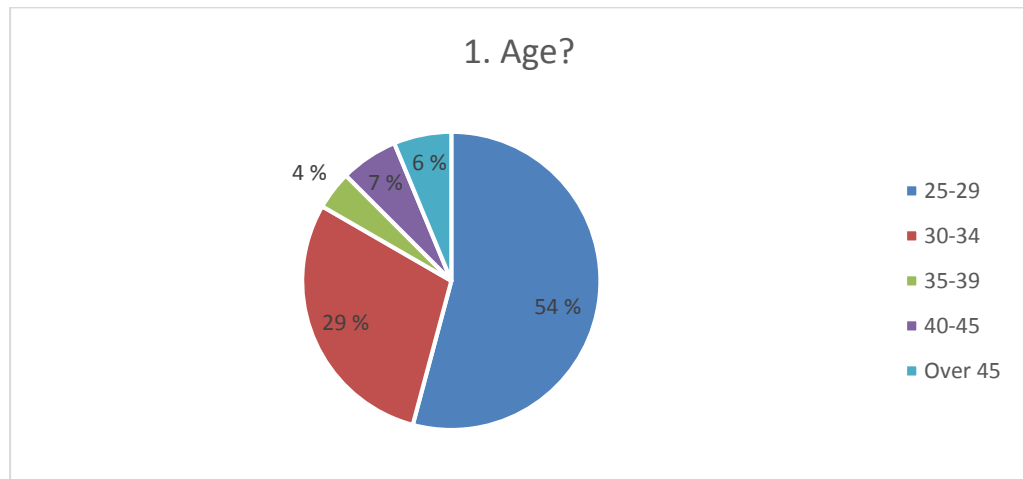


FIGURE 5. General Survey's Question 1 Results

As seen in Figure 5, the vast majority of the respondents are aged between 25 and 29. The second biggest group are men aged 30 to 34. This might also be due to the fact that the author, as well as the people who shared the survey, are aged from the early 20s to the 30s. Figure 6 shows similar results from the customers' survey.

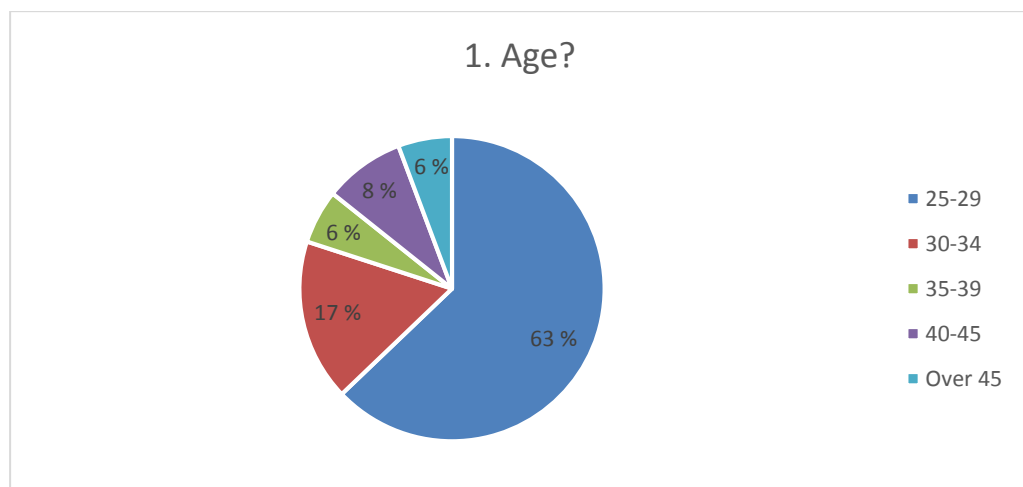


FIGURE 6. Customers' Survey's Question 1 Results

With a slight difference to the general survey, men aged 25 to 29 remain as the biggest group of the case company's audience. People over the age 29 make up 37% of the respondents. Figures 7 and 8 show the life situations of the respondents.

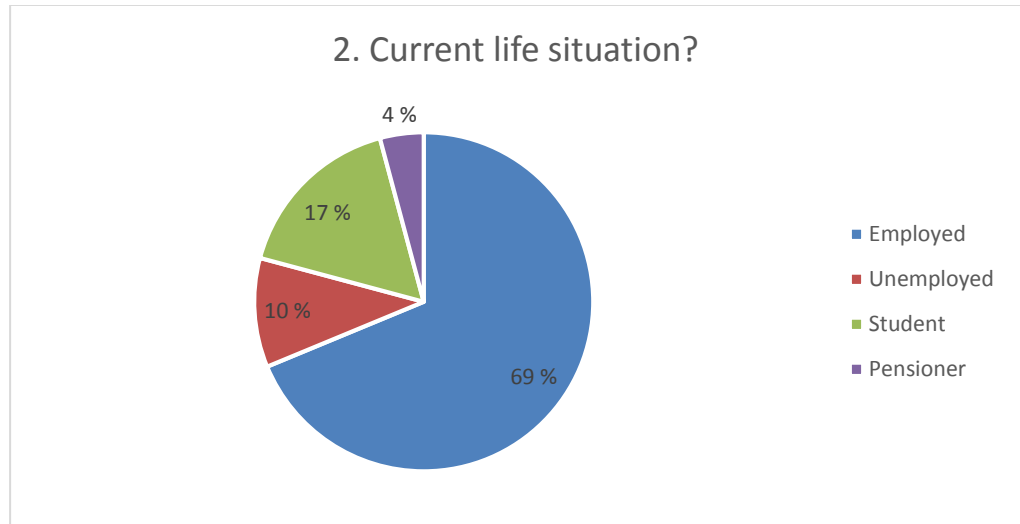


FIGURE 7. General Survey's Question 2 Results

Most of the respondents in Figure 7 are employed, taking 69% of the respondents. The rest of the respondents are either students, pensioners or unemployed. As stated in the theoretical part in Chapter 4, the life situation and employment statuses can affect the buying decisions by a large amount. The customers' responses show very similar responses.

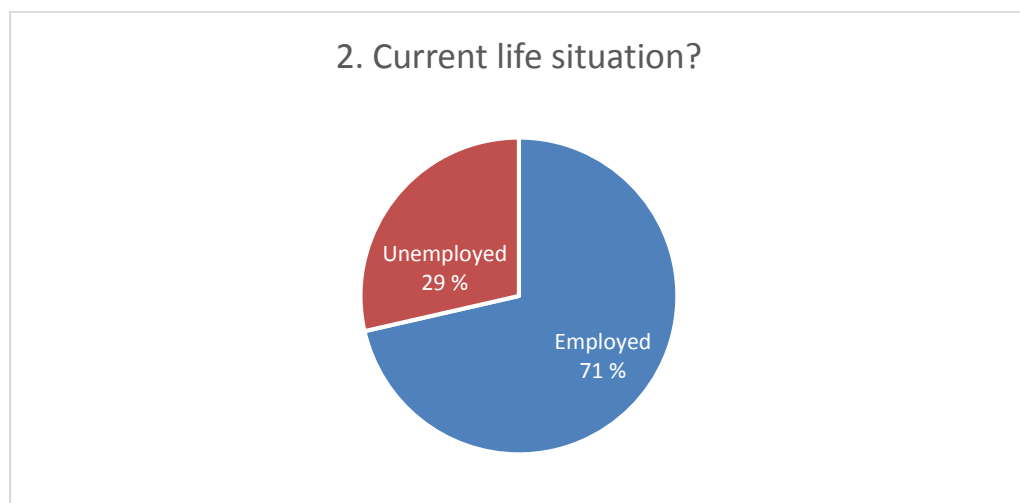


FIGURE 8. Customers' Survey's Question 2 Results

As in Figure 7, in Figure 8 most of the respondents are employed as well. The economical situation in life is a direct correlation with how much money one can spend on products and services, and thus the results for this are rational: Népra's pricing is on the higher end due to their transparent and ethical supply chain with fair wages.

Figures 9 and 10 show the answers for question three.

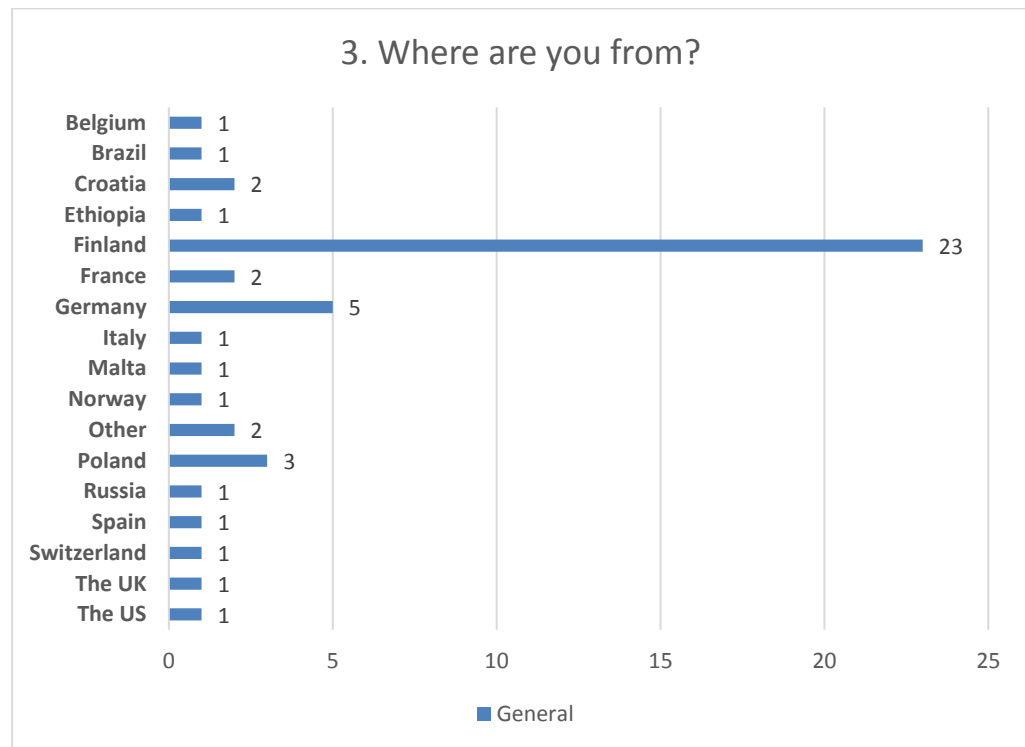


FIGURE 9. General Survey's Question 3 Results

From Figure 9 it can be seen that the respondents come from a wide variety of different countries, although the majority of the answers are from Finland. By having answers from other countries, it is easier to generalize the results for this research as it will give a wider idea of men's preferences all over the world. Two of the answers were labelled as "Other" as the responses did not include any recognizable countries or cities. Figure 10 shows the results for the same question from the customers.

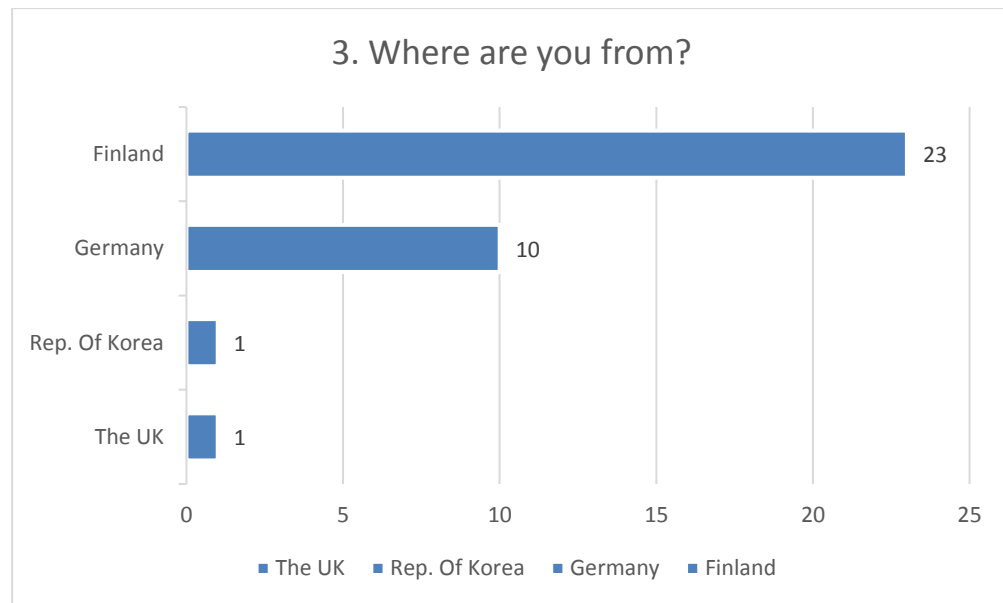


FIGURE 10. Customer's Survey Question 3 Results

By looking at the figure above, it can be seen that the customers are mainly from Finland and Germany, with two exceptions: one from Republic of Korea and one from the UK. As the case company is a start-up, with headquarters in Finland and collaborations in Germany, the results were expected.

Figure 11 shows the question four (4), which was about the hobbies of the respondents. The responses for this question can help the company when designing new clothing lines. The options were given by the case company, and are based on an assumption on what the customers might enjoy doing on their free time.

4. What are your hobbies? Please choose max. 2 options that apply to you the most.

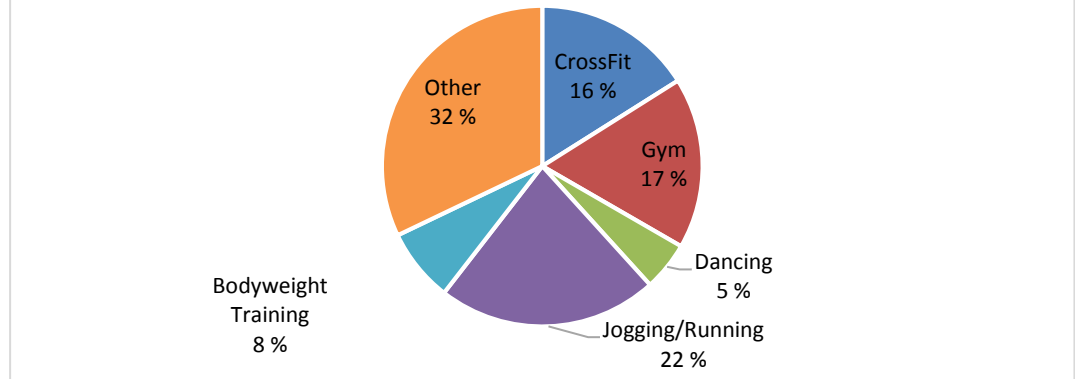


FIGURE 11. General Survey's Question 4 Results

For the question four, the responses were divided quite evenly between the given choices; jogging/running, crossfit and gym being the most popular hobbies. However, the biggest section is "Other" where the respondents could write their own option. The list of the answers can be found below. Some of the answers appeared more than once, and the amount of the same answer listed is written after the sport.

Responses in "Other" in an alphabetical order:

- Badminton
- Ball games
- Boffering
- Climbing
- Crosscountry Skiing ^2
- Cycling ^4
- Fishing
- Floorball ^2
- Football ^2
- Golf
- Han Moo Do
- Hiking
- Ice Hockey ^2

- Jang Su
- Rugby
- Swimming ^3
- Tennis
- Triathlon ^2
- Volleyball
- Responses that are not applicable for this research: Netflix, Music and Food

From the above answers cycling, different ball games and swimming were repeated the most. The list is quite long, which can imply that the respondents for the general survey have different hobbies than the usual customer of the case company. Figure 12 shows the results from the customers for the same questions.

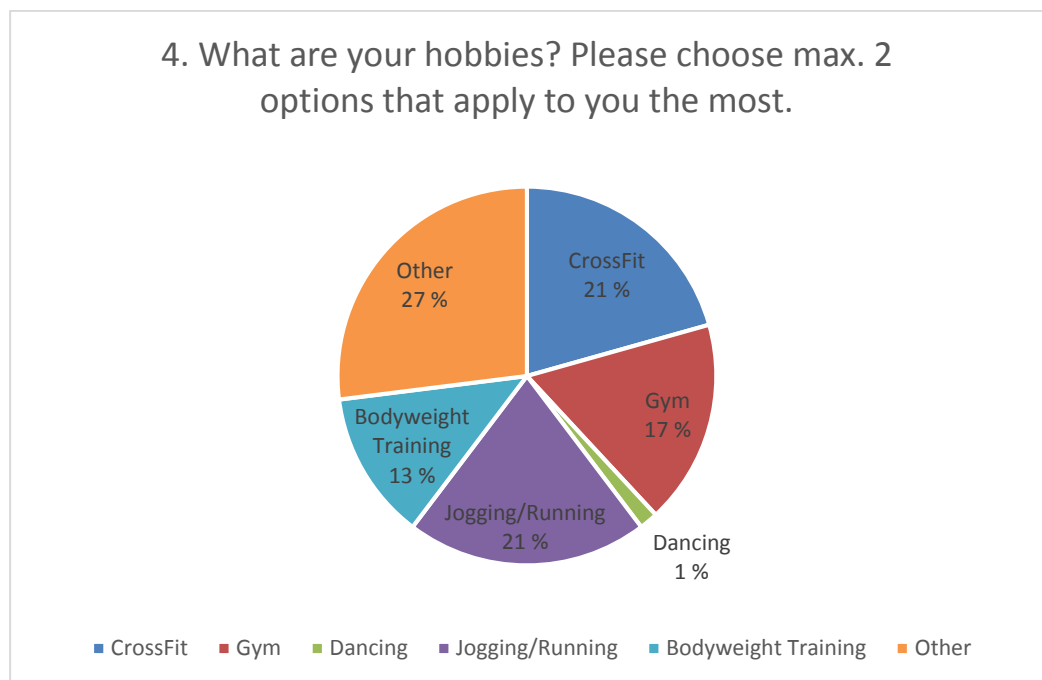


FIGURE 12. Customers' Survey's Question 4 Results

As in Figure 11, the responses from the customers in Figure 12 are divided equally between the choices. For the customers, the most popular hobbies are crossfit and jogging/running, both with 21% of the votes. "Other" option was given for the customers as well, and 27% answered to it. A list of the answers is provided below.

Responses in “Other” in an alphabetical order:

- Ball games
- Cycling ^3
- Floorball ^2
- Football ^2
- Golf
- Ice Hockey
- Pilates
- Triathlon ^2
- Yoga
- Not applicable for the purpose of this research: Music, Volunteer Firefighter, Music

The list is shorter than the one from the general survey, however it shows that the customers might have different hobbies than what the case company was expecting. Cycling and different ball games appeared on this list as well. As previously stated, these common hobbies can help the company in the future, when designing new clothing lines for the company.

Figures 13 and 14 show the answers to question five (5). The questions differ slightly; customers were asked where they heard about Népra, whereas the others were asked whether they knew about Népra before the survey.



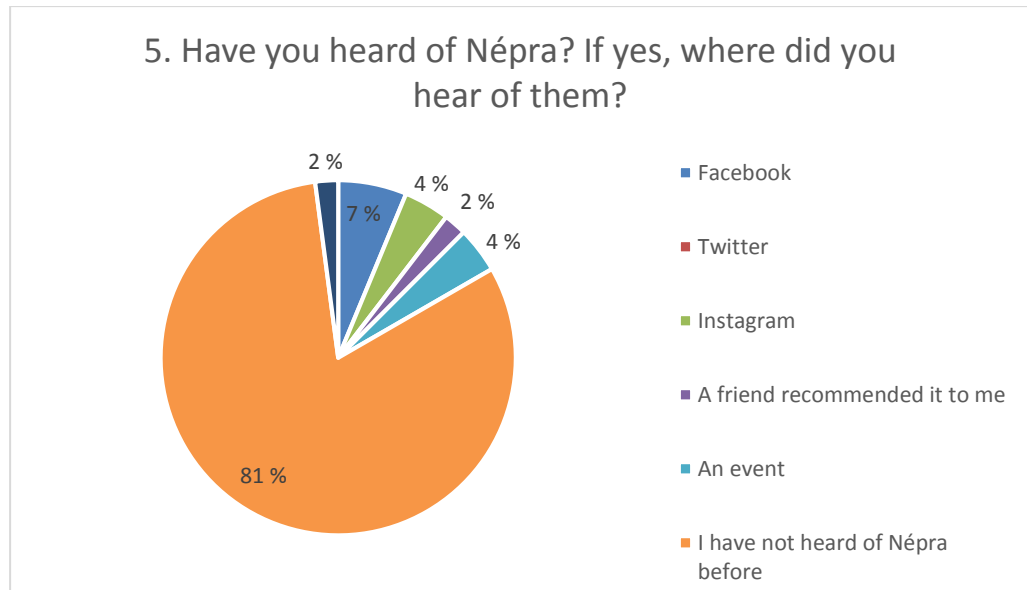


FIGURE 13. General Survey's Question 5 Results

The figure above tells that most of the respondents did not know about Népra beforehand, with only a few exceptions. Facebook was the biggest source of knowing the brand in this case. Figure 13 shows the results on how the customers found out about Népra – these results show the strongest points of Népra's marketing, which can be taken advantage of when making a future plan for marketing and advertising.

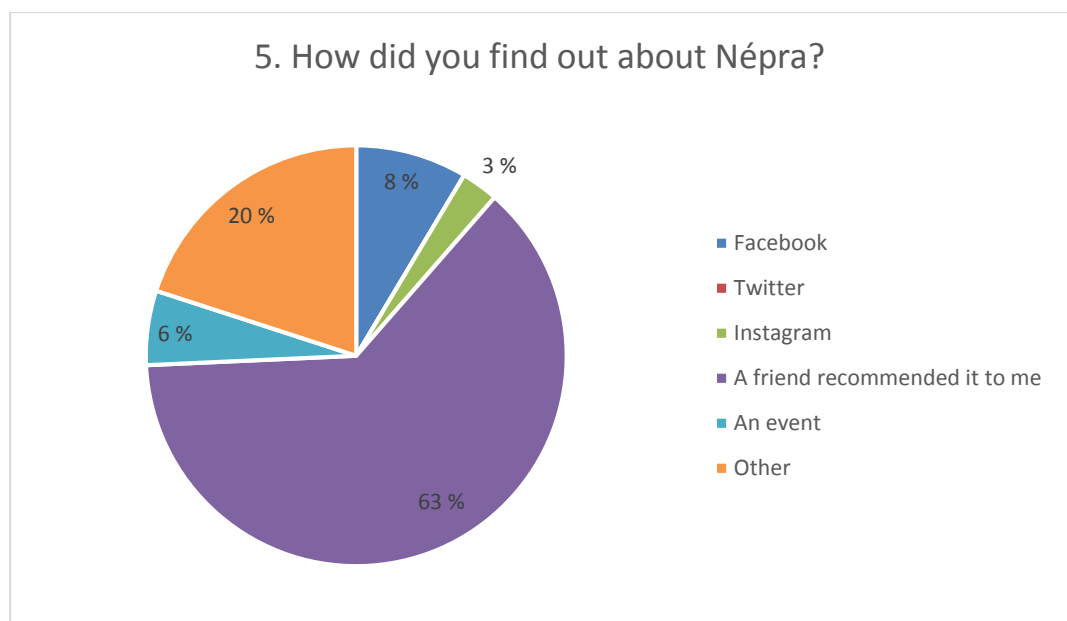


FIGURE 14. Customers' Survey's Question 5 Results

As Figure 14 shows, most of the customers got to know Népra by word-of-mouth, meaning they heard about the company from a friend. Only 11% of the answerers chose a type of social media in this question – Facebook being the biggest platform in this survey as well. As stated earlier in Chapter 4, Népra is the least active on Facebook. These results can be seen as an opportunity to become more active on social media when it comes to marketing to the male audience. The option that got the second most answers was “Other”, with 20% of the answers. The list of the respondents’ answers can be found below.

“Other” responses:

- “Essi” (Co-Founder of Népra)
- “I know Ama” (Anna-Mari, Co-Founder of Népra)
- “Anna-Mari is in our crossfit box”
- “CrossFit Box 227”
- “Knowing Anna-Mari Niutanen”
- “Can’t remember, saw the logo somewhere online and thought it looks cool”
- “Met one of the entrepreneurs in person”

The results above show that the strong advantages of the company are the founders’ appearances in crossfit boxes and the networking they do.

Figures 15 and 16 show the results for the sixth question, where the activewear brand preferences were asked. This is to get a general idea of what type of brands men prefer to use.

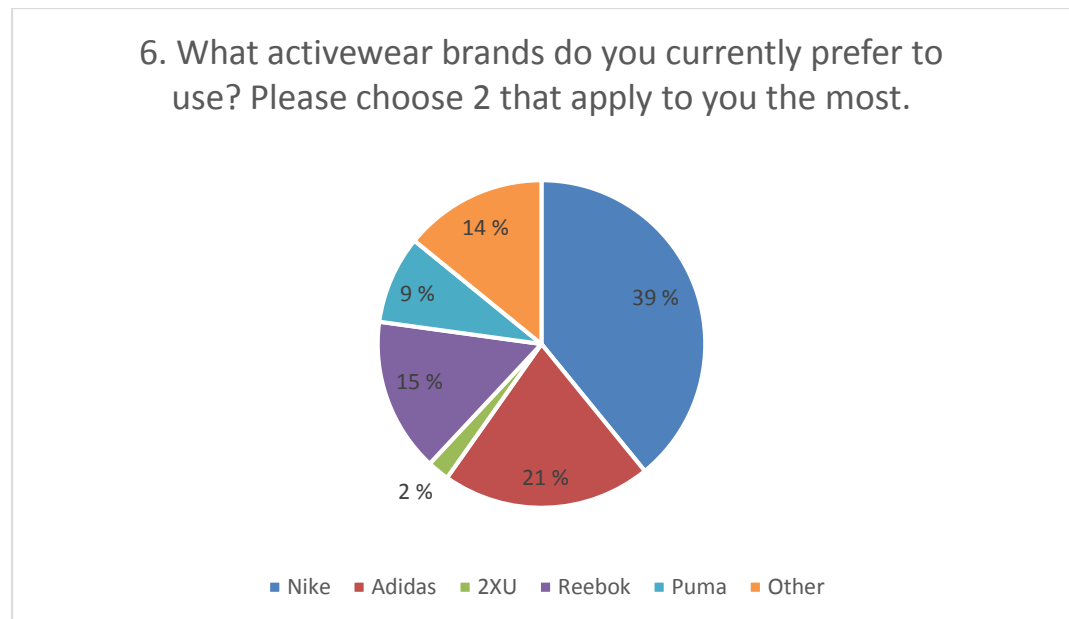


FIGURE 15. General Survey's Question 6 Results

The most popular brand is Nike, taking over 39% of the answers. The second most popular is Adidas, with 21% of the answers. These results were not surprising, as both of the brands have been on trend in activewear for the past few years (Woolf 2016). The author herself has also seen products from both brands used as streetwear, and expected similar results beforehand. A large portion of the answers (14%) chose "Other", and the list of the preferred brands can be found below.

"Other" responses in an alphabetical order:

- Bauer
- Decathlon
- Easton
- Gilbert
- Rogue
- Skila
- Under Armour ^3
- No particular brand preferences ^2

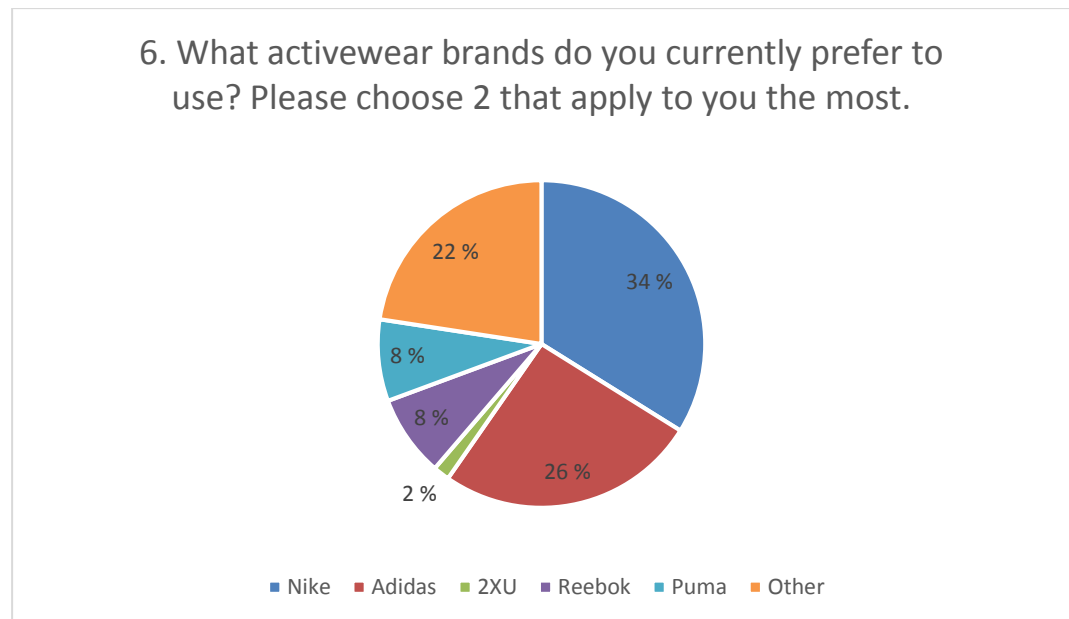


FIGURE 16. Customers' Survey's Question 6 Results

The above figure shows very similar results to the general survey one in Figure 15. As previously stated, the popularity of Nike and Adidas were expected.

Other:

- Asics
- Crivit
- Népra x5
- Norröna
- Oneway
- Rogue Fitness
- Starter
- Under Armour
- No particular brand preferences

The responses above show that Népra was also included in the list of preferred brands by five people. This says that Népra's current customer base is loyal, and as a brand can take advantage of the loyalty of the customers. Customer loyalty was discussed in the Chapter 3: keeping loyal customers is vital for brands in general.

Figure 17 shows the results for the next question, which tells whether the respondents prefer shopping online or not.



FIGURE 17. General Survey's Question 7 Results

The above figure shows that that generally, men prefer to shop in person in different stores or pop-ups, where they can meet the sellers and feel and try on the products. Figure 18 shows similar results.

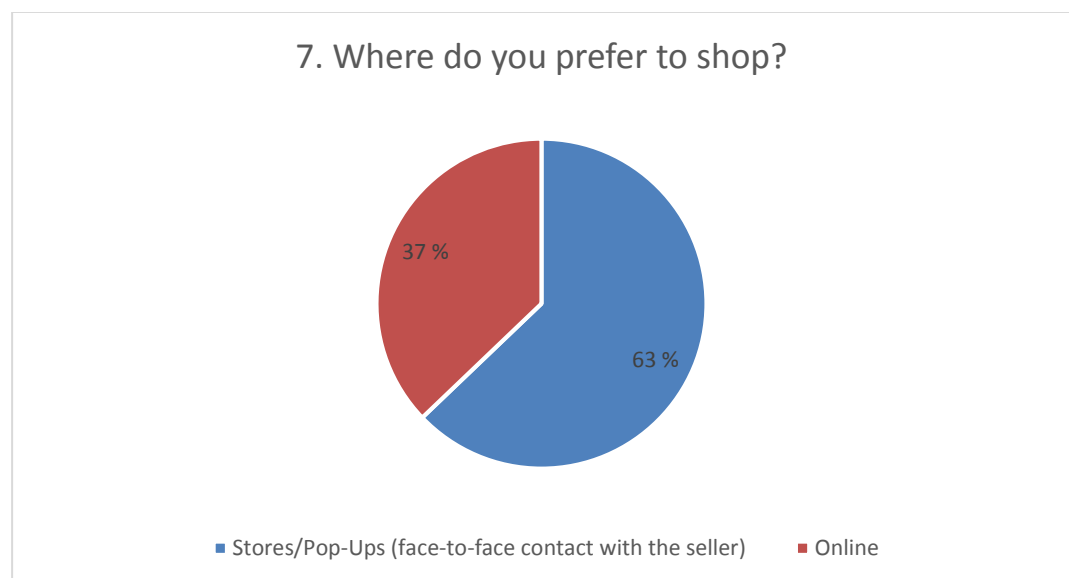


FIGURE 18. Customers' Survey's Question 7 Results

In both survey results on question seven, around 60% of men say they prefer to do their shopping in person, and 40% prefer to do it online. These results show that it could be potentially profitable for the case company to increase the number of pop-ups in different locations to allow people to try on the products and get to know the brand on the spot of purchasing.

Figures 19 and 20 show the reasons behind the purchasing. This question will tell the factors that affect the most in the case company's target audience, and will help when making future plans for the company.

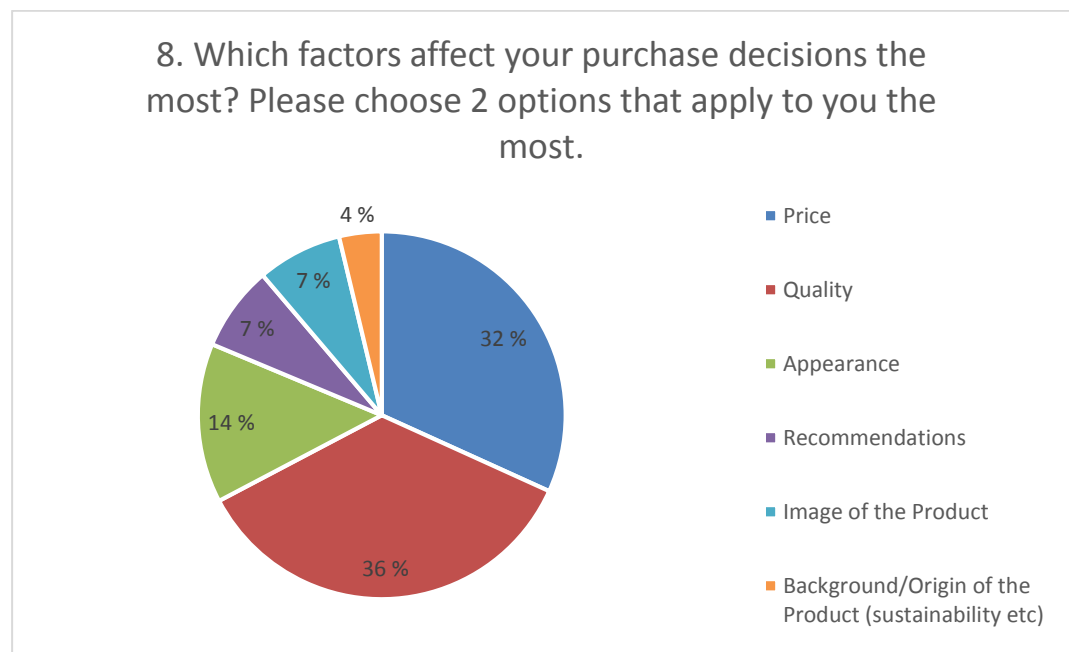


FIGURE 19. General Survey's Question 8 Results

Two of the factors listed stood out the most in the general survey: quality and price. These results were expected as they are very rational reasons for product purchasing. Appearance was also a big attribute, having 14% of the responses. It is also noteworthy to see that the background and origin of the product were the least important factor for the respondents of the general survey.

Figure 20 shows the percentages from the customers' survey on the same question.

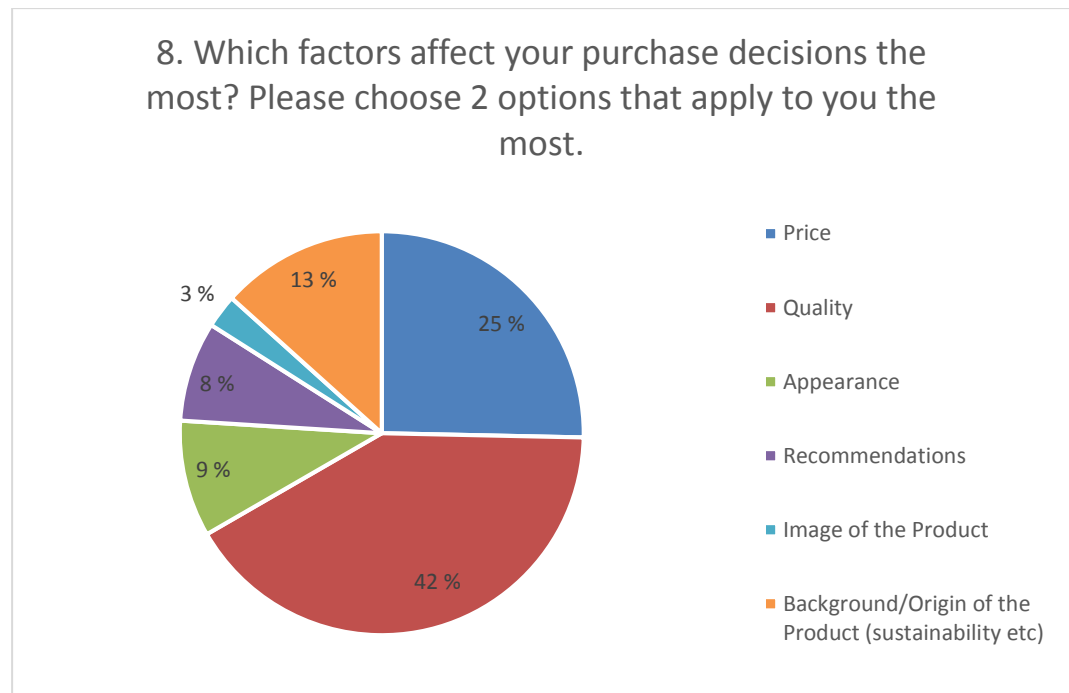


FIGURE 20. Customers' Survey's Question 8 Results

Price and quality continue to be the most important factors for consumers with the customers as well, as Figure 20 shows. However, it is easy to notice that the background of the product is more important for Népra's customers, being the third biggest factor in this survey. This result is quite rational as this survey was answered by Népra's customers, and the brand brings up their ethical supply chain in their website and marketing.

Continuing with sustainability, Figures 21 and 22 show the importance of sustainability of the products for the respondents.

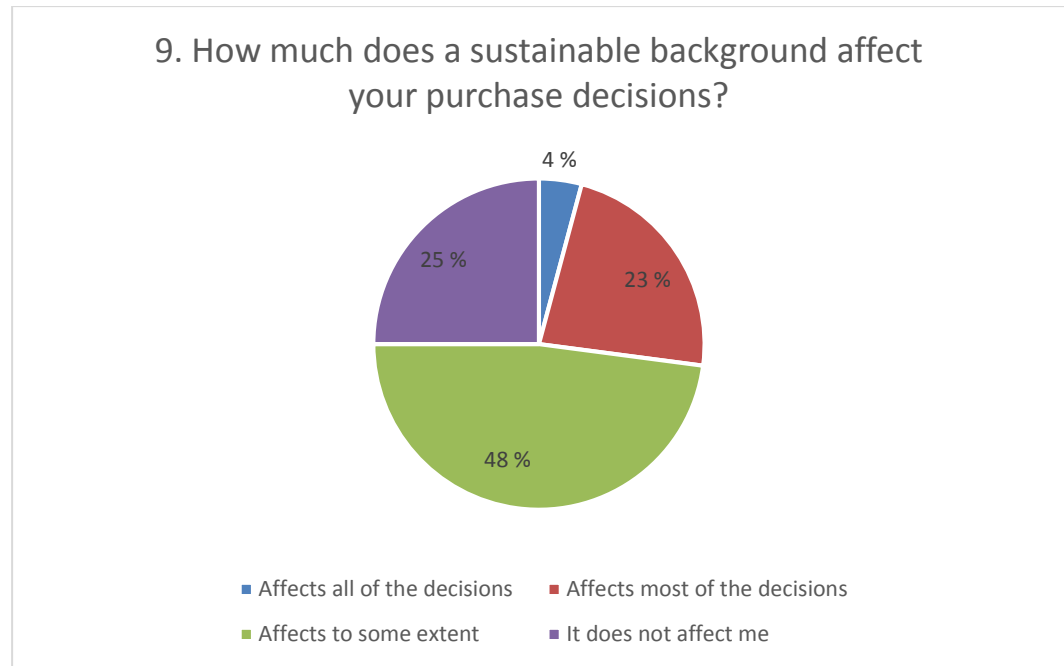


FIGURE 21. General Survey's Question 9 Results

The above figure shows that for almost half of the respondents, 48%, a sustainable background affects their purchasing decisions to some extent. The second biggest group with 25% of the answers shows that the background does not affect people's choices. Previously Figure 19 showed similar results, where the origin of the product was the least important attribute of the products. These results might also be due to the lack of ethical and sustainable products. In total only 27% of the respondents chose that the background affects most, or all of the purchasing decisions.

Figure 22 shows the results for the same questions from the customers of Népra.



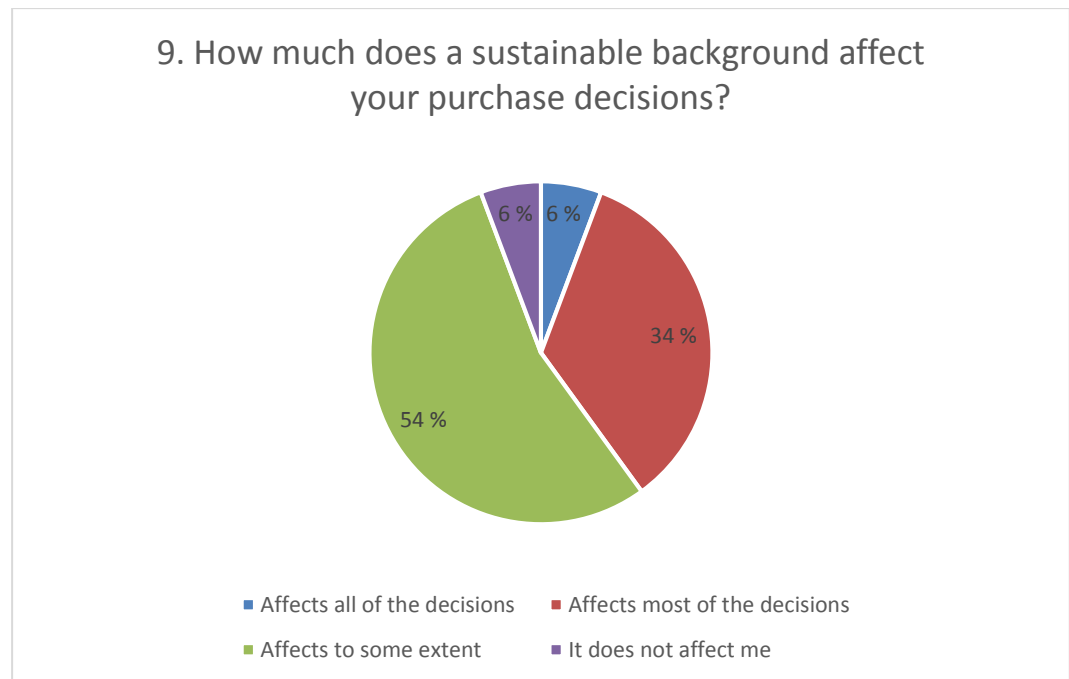


FIGURE 22. Customers' Survey's Question 9 Results

When thinking of Népra and the sustainable status in their clothing, the above figures are not surprising. In this group, the background is more important: 34% of the respondents answered that it affects most of their purchasing decisions, and 54% answered it affects to some extent. This change of attitude was also seen in Figure 20, where the background was a bigger factor for the customers than in the general survey.

The next two figures show the average time that the respondents spend on social media. As a start-up, most of the marketing is done via social media, which is why this question is important when doing a consumer behaviour research.

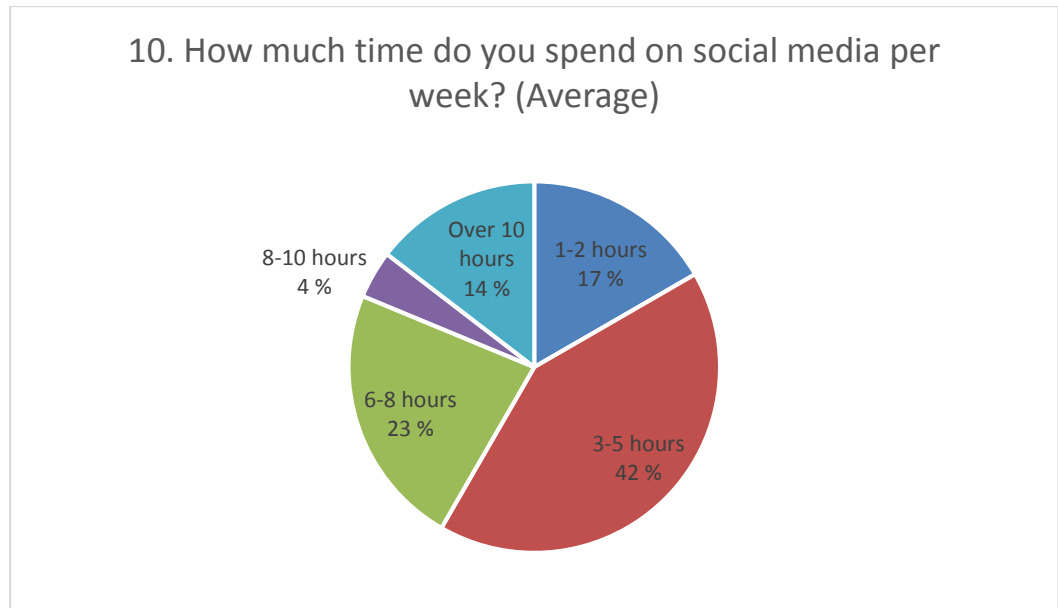


FIGURE 23. General Survey's Question 10 Results

42% of the respondents reckon they spend 3 to 5 hours on social media per week. The second biggest group, 23%, say they spend from 6 to 8 hours on it. These are personal opinions and might not show the actual time spent on social media, however these results show that men can be approached on social media due to the time they spend on it.

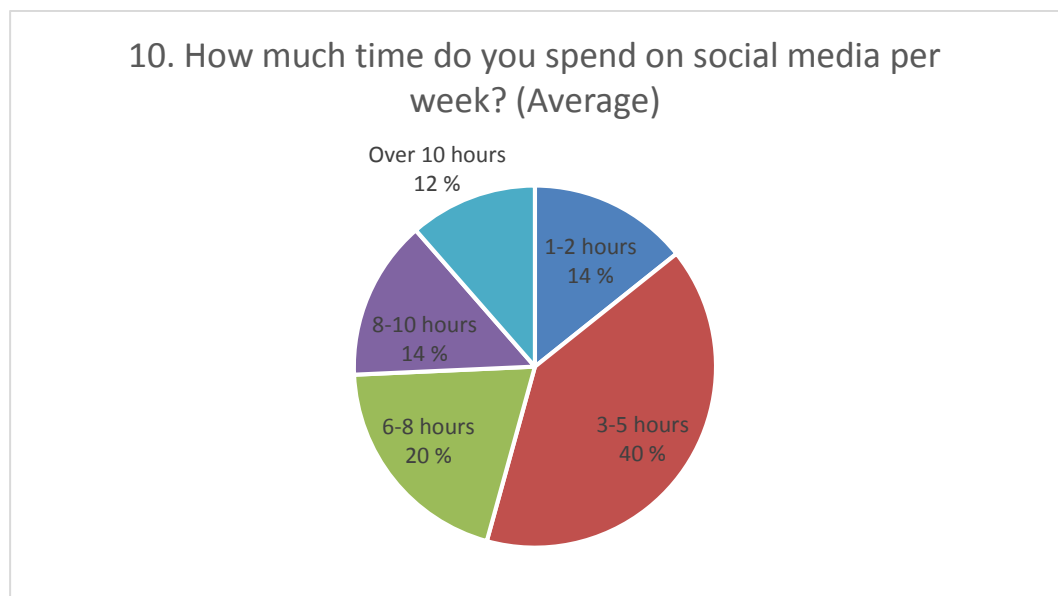


FIGURE 24. Customer's Survey's Question 10 Results

In the customers' survey the responses were divided more evenly. The majority, 40% of the respondents, still spend 3 to 5 hours on social media per week. However, the rest of the answers are divided evenly. These results show that people spend a significant amount of time on social media and companies should try to benefit from it. The next question is about whether or not men use social media for purchasing and when looking for new products.

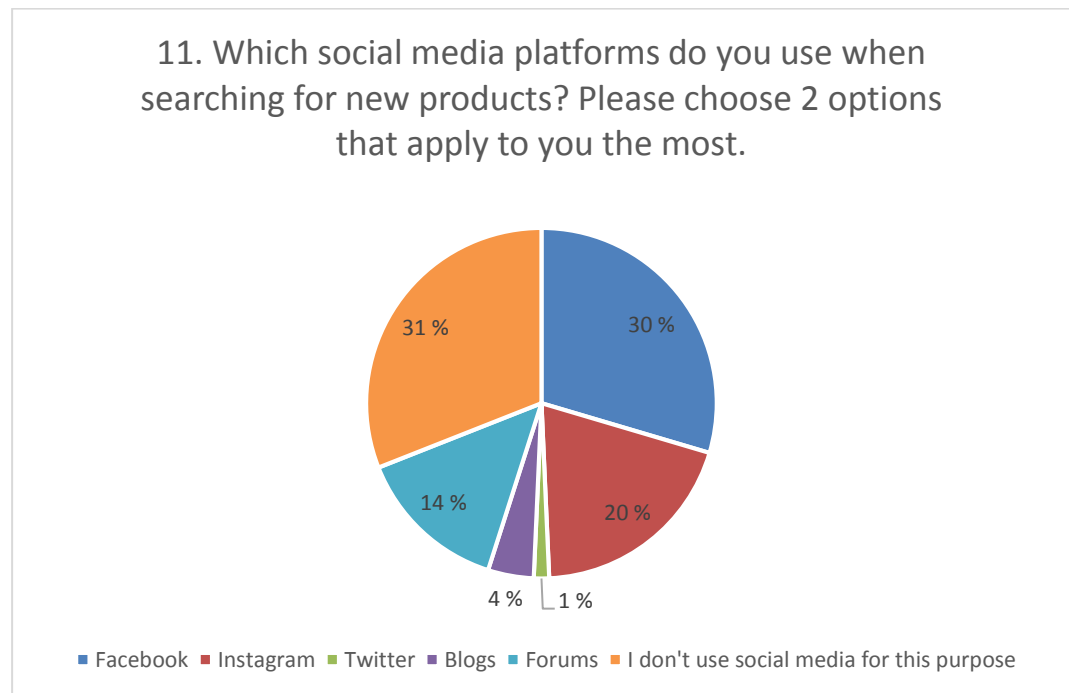


FIGURE 25. General Survey's Question 11 Results

Most of the respondents on the general survey answered that they do not use social media for searching new products. However, equally 30% of the respondents say they prefer using Facebook if searching for new products. Previously, in Figures 13 and 14 Facebook was also one of the biggest sources where people found out about Népra. The next figure show almost identical results from the company's customers.

11. Which social media platforms do you use when searching for new products? Please choose 2 options that apply to you the most.

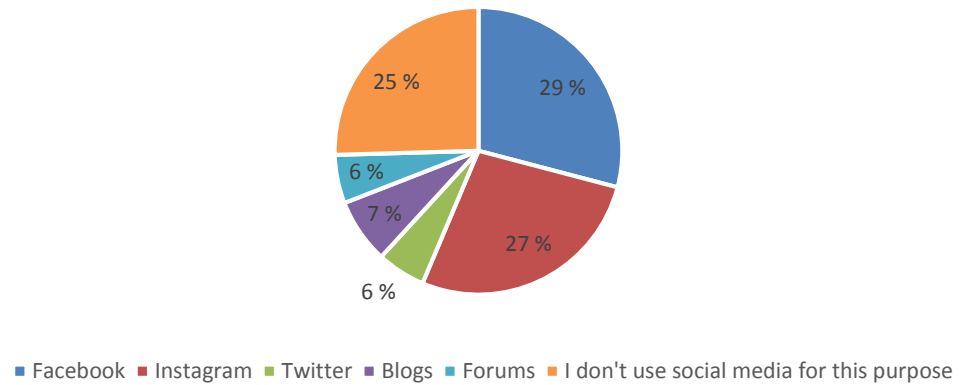


FIGURE 26. Customers' Survey's Question 11 Results

Figure 26 shows similar results to the one before – the most popular answers were either Facebook or “I don’t use social media for this purpose”. As stated in Chapter 4, Népra does not update Facebook as often as Instagram. However, these results together – Figures 13 and 14, as well as Figures 25 and 26 – show that the company could take advantage of Facebook and perhaps even its paid targeted advertisement, which was discussed in the theoretical part in Chapter 2.

12. How often do you buy new activewear?

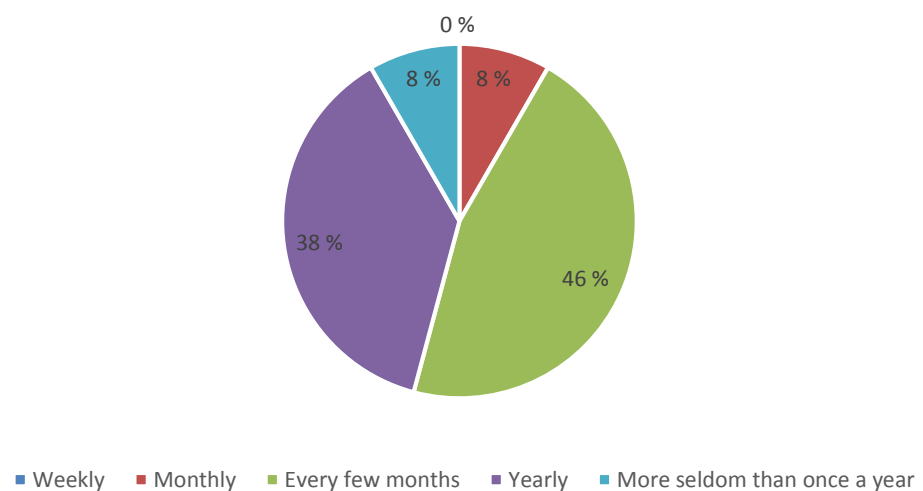


FIGURE 27. General Survey's Question 12 Results

The results on Figure 27 show, that generally men buy new activewear every few months or yearly. The results do not show the time of the year when people buy the products, but it can be assumed that new activewear is bought when the old ones are used too much or when seasons change. Figure 28 shows extremely similar results from the customers.

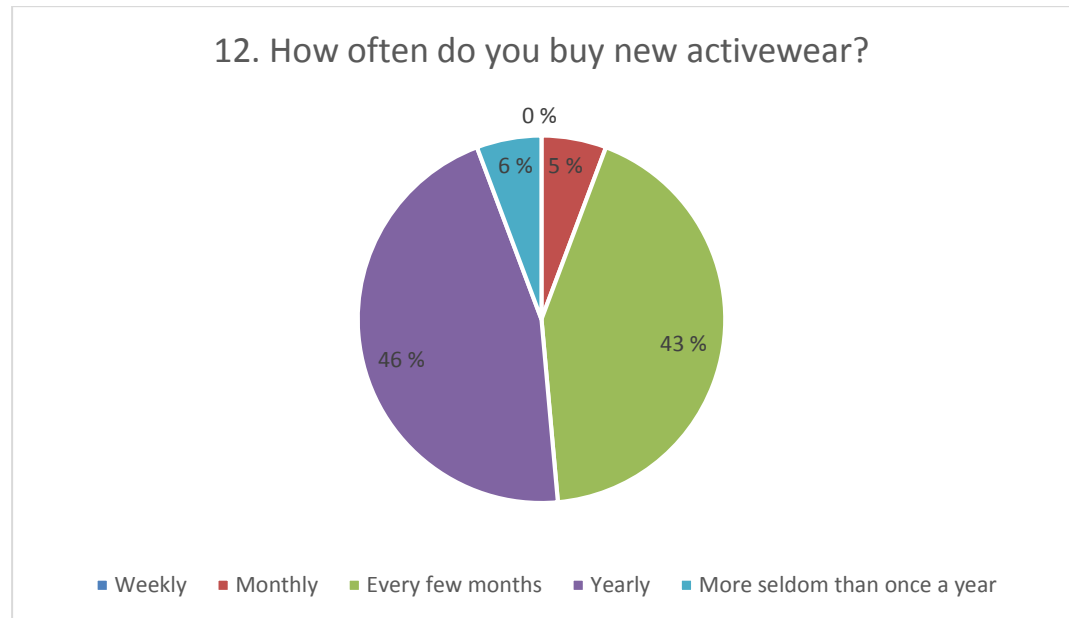


FIGURE 28. Customers' Survey's Question 12 Results

As stated, the customers line up almost identically with their answers, only with a slight difference where the customers are more prone to buying new activewear yearly rather than every few months. This can be due to the fact that the customers are generally more interested in sustainability (as seen in Figures 20 and 22), which can make people consume less than the average person.

Question 13 was different for the groups. For the general survey, the question was: "What would you wish for activewear brands to do? Regarding products, marketing, campaigns, etcetera." As the question is broad and the author did not expect for everyone to have an opinion on it, it was put as an optional question. However, there were a few responses, and all of them are listed below.

- "I want them to bring back headbands! So freaking hard to find colorful and flamboyant ones."
- "I would really like for them to offer a consistent line of products, not confusing or even ill-directing customers."
- "Quality"
- "To highlight sustainable factors of products and entire product life cycle"
- "More free articles to win, more sponsoring options"
- "More special offers"
- "Keep style and colours as simple and classy as possible"
- "That you could test products before buying"
- "Use better quality for their prices. or drop the prices for poor quality"
- "Keep style and colours as simple and classy as possible"
- "Pay more attention to the environment, especially with the outdoor brands. Greenpeace made a study less than a year ago on those and it wasn't very nice"
- "Smaller brand logos on activewear"
- "Stop using child labour."
- "Quality products. Impressive marketing campaigns. Good looking products."
- "More colours and personality to the clothing."

Although the amount of the answers is limited, some conclusions can be made from them. People seem to be interested in making the supply chains more ethical, and one person mentioned the Greenpeace study which was previously explained in Chapter 4. This shows that although the background and sustainability are not the biggest attributes when buying a product (see Figure 21), people are aware of the social issues behind clothing brands. Most of the people also seem to lack quality products and companies that they can trust: they wish companies would be more transparent on the products' lifecycles and market fairly without lying to their consumers. A popular request was for brands to offer more special offers, for example free articles that one could win from a competition.

In the survey for Népra's customers, question 13 was the following: "Is there anything you wish Népra would do differently and/or any suggestions for the company?" The answers for this question are listed below.

- "The prices could be slightly cheaper, although I do understand the pricing can be difficult."
- "Nothing but love for Népra. I'm wearing your shorts right this very second. After some active dog walking."
- "On the right tracks!"
- "Short tights for men would be good because they are needed under the shorts in weightlifting."
- "More colourful maybe patterned stuff"
- "I think the current marketing is too much faced towards women. Style of writing, messages, photos. Do a research about how other brands market themselves towards men and apply that. A little bit less of puppies, rainbow and unicorns and more towards lifting heavy stuff or something like that. Nepra has some great female athletes; I am missing some badass guys."
- "More pop-ups"
- "Go Ahead!"
- "Everything is okay."
- "In my mind the colours of t-shirts and shorts have improved a lot especially for men!"
- "Amazon Reviews."
- "Do a Golf clothing line, at least I would love it! I am sure many others would be happy to buy ethically produced, quality clothing near Hämeenlinna."

Many people seem to be happy with Népra and think that the company is on the right tracks. There were some suggestion ideas for the company as well, which are taken into account later in this chapter where suggestions for the company are made.

The final question (number 14) was whether or not the respondents wanted to get campaign information from Népra after the survey. Due to

the anonymity of this survey, the e-mails will not be shown on this thesis. In total, fourteen (14) people out of all of the 83 respondents wanted to get more information from Népra. The e-mails were given to the case company and after this research is published, the company will do an action plan regarding the matter and contact their mailing list.

#### 5.4 Comparison of the Respondent Groups

The aim of this study was to see how Népra could attract more male customers and get them to buy their products. Two surveys were conducted for the purpose of this research: one for the customers of Népra and one general one for all men aged 25 or over. The surveys got a total of 83 responses, 48 of which were from the general survey and 35 from the customers. This part of the chapter will do a more in-depth analysis of the two survey responses, taking the similarities and differences of the responses into account.

Both surveys had similar results in most of the questions. When comparing the background of the respondent groups, the biggest differences were the countries the respondents came from. The general survey had more people from other countries and from different life situations, whereas the consumers were mainly from Finland or Germany and most of them were employed. The amount of different backgrounds will help to generalize the results when making suggestions for the future – a wider selection can show the general attitudes and interests of men worldwide. However, the customers' survey results show that one might need to be employed in order to buy Népras clothing: as previously stated, the pricing is above average due to their ethical supply chain and fair wages.

The majority of all of the respondents were aged from 25 to 34 years. The hobbies were similar as well: crossfit, jogging/running and gym were the most popular hobbies amongst the replies. Additionally, cycling, ball games, triathlon and swimming were mentioned as other hobbies the respondents enjoy. Because the hobbies are so similar in both respondent groups, Népra could use this information in the future when designing new



products, for example by producing clothing that could be used in cycling or swimming. In both of the surveys, Nike and Adidas were one of the most popular brands of all the alternatives for activewear brands.

Both respondent groups had similar buying behaviours as well: the preferred way of shopping is in stores or pop-ups, being face-to-face with the seller and being able to try on the products. Online shopping had about 40% of the votes on both surveys. The groups also prioritize products in the same way: quality and price are the most important attributes on products, and the third one is the appearance of the product.

Sustainability is a factor where the groups differ: Népra's customer found that sustainability is a more important factor when compared to the other survey. This result was not surprising as Népra is open about their supply chain and highlights their ethical production. However, the responses from the general survey imply that people are aware and concerned of the social issues: many of the comments they gave about activewear brands' products were related to sweatshops and sustainability. The reason behind this clash of interests might be the lack of socially conscious activewear brands – a topic which was covered in Chapter 4.

In question 13, where the general survey asked for wishes that activewear brands would do and where the customers' survey asked for suggestions for Népra, a few similarities rose from the responses. Pricing was one of the issues that both groups experienced and wished for more campaign offers or just generally lower prices.

In short, the respondent groups showed a lot of similarities which help in generalizing and combining the results for the next part of the chapter, where the author suggests ideas for changes in marketing, and in general, for the company.

### 5.5 Suggestions for the Case Company

After analysing the results, the author came up with a few ideas for the company's future based on the commonly appeared subjects regarding activewear brands.

According to the research results, men prefer doing their shopping in person at stores. This could be a potential opportunity for Népra to do more pop-ups where the customers could come and talk with the sellers and try on the products before the purchasing. Many of the respondents also heard about Népra from the founders themselves – this is a clear advantage of the company and the founders should continue with their good networking skills. These skills are also vital in pop-ups, where the founders can show up and tell about the products and the brand.

The research also showed that men do not use social media when looking for new products to buy. However, they do use social media rather frequently. Although Népra is a start-up and the plans need to have an economic point of view, it could be a profitable investment to pay for targeted advertising for example on Facebook. According to the survey results, Facebook was one of the most commonly used social media platform for men if they were searching for new products. If the company prefers not to pay for advertising, they could instead increase their visibility on social media. According to a study, people tend to browse social media during their lunch hours from 11AM to 1PM, and during the evenings after work from 6PM to 8PM (Chacon 2017). Népra could start posting twice a day to social media with different hashtags to get more visibility.

When marketing, Népra also needs to try to attract the male customer by adding more male athletes in their pictures and focusing more on explosive and heavy exercises, such as heavy lifting, as one of the respondents commented on the second last question. Although the customers clearly care about the sustainable background and holistic training, the male customers seem to need more roughness to the marketing. The author suggests posting more pictures of people

exercising, for example running or lifting weights, to give a more active image of the brand. The pictures the company is posting currently are clear and nicely lighted, however most of the content seem to be more about feeling good. This aspect and brand aesthetic could be applied to pictures with active people as well.

Many of the respondents seemed to wish for more colour options, perhaps even patterns for men. The most important aspects of activewear products were quality and price, quality being the most important. Since Népra is a new business and they aim to pay fair wages for everyone, pricing might be hard to lower – however, a good option for the brand would be to do special campaigns or discounts for men every so often. The current customers of Népra seem very content and loyal to the brand, and the company should take advantage of it by doing special offers for them, for example by giving discounts for people that have subscribed to their mailing list. This could increase the general positive feedback from customers and make them stay with the brand longer. The offers do not have to be limited to existing customers, as campaigns could be an attractive way of marketing for new customers as well. Many companies tend to give new subscribers a certain percentage off the first order – this could be something that Népra could consider doing. In addition, a new way of doing discount sales are flash sales. In these, the companies sell a product at noticeably lower prices for a short period of time, for example a couple of hours on a Friday (Cambridge Dictionary 2017).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude all of the previous information that the author gathered, answer all of the research questions, explain the validity and reliability of the research and make suggestions for further research.

### 6.1 Answers to Research Questions

The research of this thesis was conducted to find out how the case company could attract more male customers. First, the main research question is discussed and after that, the sub-questions are answered.

The main research question of the thesis is:

**How should the case company market their products in order to increase their sales in the males' department?**

The findings of the thesis indicate that men prefer to shop in person where they can talk face-to-face with the seller and try on the clothing before the actual purchase. This shows an opportunity to the case company, as they could arrange more pop-ups where they show off their products and people would be more open to trying them. The surveys also pointed out that the founders are very good at networking, and this could be used as an advantage when doing pop-ups.

The results also show that men use a significant amount of time on social media, but they do not use for getting information on products. However, because the time they spend on social media is high, it is possible to reach them through it. The best way to market to men is to change the pictures and style of writing to a more masculine side: for example, the pictures could be taken in situations where the people in them are being active, for example lifting weights or running. The company could also consider doing targeted marketing and paying for it more often.

The findings also show that although men currently do not base their purchasing decisions on the products' sustainable background, they are still concerned and aware about the social and environmental issues in activewear. By enhancing the transparent supply chain more on almost a daily basis in marketing, Népra could possibly be able to attract even more customers.

The sub-questions:

### **What attributes in activewear are the most important for men?**

The main attributes of activewear for men were quality and pricing, quality being slightly more important than price. The third most important aspect was the appearance of the clothings.

### **Do men use social media for purchasing purposes?**

The findings of this research showed that men generally do not use social media when considering purchasing new products or services, and only a minority of the respondents

### **How often do men buy new activewear?**

The research indicates that men buy new activewear either yearly or every few months. This can imply that men buy new activewear once a year, for example when a product has gone bad, or when seasons change.

## **6.2 Validity and Reliability**

The thesis consists of two parts: the theoretical part and the empirical part, and thus, the research was done by using both primary and secondary data. The secondary information was collected from reliable articles and online sources as well as from published literature related to the topic. Primary data was collected by conducting a qualitative online survey for two respondent groups: for the existing customers of the case company as well as a general survey for men aged 25 or over. The surveys were made as similar as possible and in total, they reached 83 responses. The

general survey had 48 of the responses and the one for the customers reached a total of 35 responses. Thus, the respondent groups were small, however for the purpose of this research the number of the respondents were enough to draw some conclusions and make suggestions for the company. Before the surveys were published online, they were tested to make sure that every aspect of the surveys worked and were easy to understand and answer to. The questions were written in English and in a neutral tone. Information on the purpose of the surveys was given and anonymity was guaranteed to the respondents. Validity presents the degree to which the findings of the research actually answer the research questions, and a research has a high reliability when another researcher could do the same study and get the same results (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 156-157). Thanks to the anonymity, clear surveys and the number of responses, the research can be considered valid and reliable, if the same research was done with the same method. However, people's preferences, for example male consumers' preferred brands, might change over time which could mean a slightly different result if the survey was done at a different time.

### 6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

For further research, the author suggests analysing activewear brands and their way of marketing products that are aimed for men. Some aspects of marketing, especially digital media marketing, are simple to adapt to the company's own marketing plan. For example, the angles and the general feel of the pictures that the brands post. As the research results showed that Nike and Adidas were two of the most popular brands within the customers as well as the other people who took the survey, the author suggests looking into those two companies first. If possible, it would also be beneficial to find similar start-ups and look into what they are doing with their marketing.

## 7 SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis was to find out new ways that the case company could use to get more male customers and increase their sales. The hypothesis of the case company was that men buy new items rarely and that they do not use social media often. The lack of sales in the males' department inspired this thesis and the research goals and methods are presented in the first chapter.

The theoretical framework includes chapters two and three. Chapter two presents the main idea of marketing and the new era of it, in other words the digital marketing ways. The second chapter also tells the best ways to market as a start-up company, as the case company is a new business. Chapter three focuses on consumer research and the importance of it when entering a new market. The third chapter explains the stages of the purchasing decision process and the key factors affecting an individual's purchasing decisions.

Chapter four starts the empirical part of the thesis by introducing the case company Népra and their current marketing ways to the reader. The activewear industry is also presented in the fourth chapter. The empirical part continues in chapter five, where the research methods and analysis is done in detail. This chapter includes the questions and responses of both of the conducted surveys and an analysis of them. A comparison of the two respondent groups is done and after that, the author made some suggestions for the case company that could potentially help them in the future.

The thesis finishes to the sixth chapter where a conclusion is made. The research questions are answered and validity and reliability are measured. Recommendations for further research are also presented in chapter six. This thesis reached all the objectives that were set beforehand.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. The General Survey

#### Consumer Questionnaire

Thesis Survey for men aged 25 or over.

The following survey is a part of a thesis for a business student from Lahti University of Applied Sciences. All answers for the survey will remain anonymous. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

Thank you for your response!

1. Age?

- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30-34
- ☐ 35-39
- ☐ 40-44
- ☐ Over 45

2. Current life situation?

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Pensioner

3. Where are you from?

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are your hobbies? Please choose max. 2 options that apply to you the most.

- ☐ Crossfit
- ☐ Gym
- ☐ Dancing
- ☐ Jogging/Running
- ☐ Bodyweight Training
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you heard of Népra? If yes, where did you hear of them?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ A friend recommended it to me
- ☐ An event
- ☐ I have not heard of Népra before
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What activewear brands do you currently prefer to use? Please choose 2 that apply to you the most.

- ☐ Nike

- Adidas
- 2XU
- Reebok
- Puma
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Where do you prefer to shop?

- Online
- Shop/Pop-Ups (face-to-face contact with the seller)

8. Which factors affect your purchase decisions? Please choose 2 options that apply to you the most.

- Price
- Quality
- Appearance
- Recommendations
- Image of the Product
- Background/Origin of the Product (sustainability etc)

9. How much does a sustainable background affect your purchase decisions?

- Affects all of the decisions
- Affects most of the decisions
- Affects to some extent
- It does not affect me

10. How much time do you spend on social media per week?  
(Average)

- 1-2 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 6-8 hours
- 8-10 hours
- Over 10 hours

11. Which social media platforms do you use when searching for new products? Please choose 2 options that apply to you the most.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Forums
- I don't use social media for this purpose

12. How often do you buy new activewear?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Every few months
- Yearly
- More seldom than once a year

13. What would you wish for activewear brands to do? Regarding products, marketing, campaigns, etcetera. (Optional)

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14. Do you wish to get campaign information from Népra and/or the results of this questionnaire? If yes, please write your e-mail here. (Optional)

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## APPENDIX 2. The Survey for Népra's Customers

### Népra Consumer Questionnaire

Thesis Survey for men aged 25 or over.

The following survey is a part of a thesis for a business student from Lahti University of Applied Sciences. All answers for the survey will remain anonymous. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

Thank you for your response!

1. Age?

- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30-34
- ☐ 35-39
- ☐ 40-44
- ☐ Over 45

2. Current life situation?

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Pensioner

3. Where are you from?

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are your hobbies? Please choose max. 2 options that apply to you the most.

- ☐ Crossfit
- ☐ Gym
- ☐ Dancing
- ☐ Jogging/Running
- ☐ Bodyweight Training
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. How did you find out about Népra?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ A friend recommended it to me
- ☐ An event
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What activewear brands do you currently prefer to use? Please choose 2 that apply to you the most.

- ☐ Nike
- ☐ Adidas
- ☐ 2XU
- ☐ Reebok

- Puma
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Where do you prefer to shop?

- Online
- Shop/Pop-Ups (face-to-face contact with the seller)

8. Which factors affect your purchase decisions? Please choose 2 options that apply to you the most.

- Price
- Quality
- Appearance
- Recommendations
- Image of the Product
- Background/Origin of the Product (sustainability etc)

9. How much does a sustainable background affect your purchase decisions?

- Affects all of the decisions
- Affects most of the decisions
- Affects to some extent
- It does not affect me

10. How much time do you spend on social media per week? (Average)

- 1-2 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 6-8 hours
- 8-10 hours
- Over 10 hours

11. Which social media platforms do you use when searching for new products? Please choose 2 options that apply to you the most.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Forums
- I don't use social media for this purpose

12. How often do you buy new activewear?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Every few months
- Yearly
- More seldom than once a year

13. Is there anything you wish Népra would do differently and/or any suggestions for the company? (Optional)

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14. Do you wish to get campaigning information from Népra and/or the results of this questionnaire? If yes, please write your e-mail here.  
(Optional)

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